

SHEIKH AHMAD SIRHINDI'S THOUGHT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUFISM

Thesis

**Submitted to the University of Kashmir
for the award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)**

In

Islamic Studies

By

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2001

Dedicated to my

Mother

یاد سے تیری دلِ درد آشنا معمور ہے
جیسے کعبے میں دُعاؤں سے فضا معمور ہے

(علامہ اقبال والدہ مرحومہ کی یاد میں)



In the Name of Allah

Shah-i-Hamadan Institute of Islamic Studies

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Ref. No.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, ***Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi's Thought And Its Impact on the Development of Sufism***, submitted by Mr. **Afroz Ahmad Bisati**, for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), in Islamic Studies, is an original research work of the candidate. The research work has been carried out under my supervision. It is further certified that the work has not been submitted for any other degree so far.

I deem it fit for submission for the award of Ph.D. Degree.

Dr. Naseem Ahmad Shah
Supervisor

Acknowledgements

It gives me immense pleasure and satisfaction to acknowledge the help and guidance of all those who assisted me in one-way or the other, in completion of the present work. In the first place, I owe profound thanks to my teacher and Supervisor, Dr. Nazam A. Shah, Reader, Shah-i-Hamadan Institute of Islamic Studies (SHIS), University of Kashmir (U.K), for his erudite and efficacious guidance. Without his constant encouragement, the work would not have been completed.

My special thanks are due to Dr. Sayyid M. Younis Geelani, Sr. Reader, (SHIS, U.K.), Dr. Hamidullah Marazi, Reader (SHIS, U.K.) and Dr. Ab. Rashid Bhat, Sr. Lecturer (SHIS, U.K.) whom I frequently consulted and got benefited by their valuable suggestions. My special thanks are also due to Prof. Ab. Haq Ansari, of Aligarh, who provided me access to his personal library. Prof. G.R. Malik, Deptt. of English, U.K., also deserves to be thanked for translating the poem of Dr. Iqbal.

I am indebted to all my friends particularly Mr. Ab. Rashid Beigh, Peer Gh. Rasool, Mr. Munzeb, Mr. Amin (Trali), Mr. Gh. Nabi Lone, Mr. Manzoor, Mr. Jamzel, Mr. Bashir (KAS), Mr. Gul Muhammad, Mr. Mushtaq (Law), Mr. Mushtaq (Hindi), Mr. Muzafar, Mr. Mushtaq (Iqbaligat), Mr. Mahmud, and Mr. Thakur for their constant encouragement and company.

I also record my debt of gratitude to Mr. Ab. Majed Khan (Lecturer, Islamic Studies, A.M.U.), and Dr. Hayat Amir (Lecturer, Philosophy, A.M.U.) for their help in collection of the literature, at A.M.U. Dr. Zubair Hakeem also deserves to be thanked who always welcomed me at A.M.U. My friend Mr. Alexander Evans (United Kingdom) also deserves to be mentioned. I will like to remember all

other acquaintances and intimacies, old and new, particularly the ones whom I got introduced to, during the tenure of completion of the present work, for the moments (of happiness) that they shared with me.

The librarians of the Institute of Islamic Studies, U.K., Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Jamia Hamdard, Delhi and Zakir Husain Library, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi, deserves to be thanked for making available the research material.

It would be unjust not make a mention of all the boarders and staff of the Ghani Kashmiri Research Scholars Hostel, for their support and company. I also thank the non-teaching staff of S.H.I.S. U.K.

I must express my appreciation to Mr. Mahboob, for computerizing the dissertation expeditiously.

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CONTENTS

	Acknowledgements	i - ii
	Introduction	1 - 14
Chapter I.	Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi: The Milieu	15 - 59
Chapter II.	Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi: Life and Works	60 - 85
Chapter III.	Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi: Theological Thought—I	86 -120
	(a) Concept of God	87
	(b) Concept of Universe	98
	(c) Concept of Man	109
Chapter IV.	Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi: Theological Thought—II	121-155
	(a) Explication of the Shari‘ah	121
	(b) Re-assertion of the Prophethood	133
	(c) Review of the Muslim Sects	148
Chapter V.	Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi: Sufi Thought	156-186
Chapter VI.	Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi: Impact	187-236
	<i>I. Impact on the Development of Sufism</i>	188-221
	(a) Back to Muhammad (S)	188
	(b) Foundation of the Mujaddidiya Order	191
	(c) Impact on the Naqashbandiya Silsila	192
	(d) Impact on Sayyid Ahmad Barailwi	196
	(e) The Sufi Way and the Prophetic Way	198
	(f) Impact of <i>Wahdat al-Shuhud</i> Philosophy	202
	(g) Sirhindi’s Disciples and Their Role in the Development of his Thought	208
	<i>II. Impact on the Mughal Polity and State craft</i>	221-231
	(a) Sirhindi and Jehangir	221
	(b) Sirhindi and Shahjahan	227
	(c) Awrangzeb and the Sons of Sirhindi	228
	<i>III. Impact on the Religious Learning</i>	231-232
	<i>IV. Impact Upon the Later Thinkers</i>	232-236
Chapter VII.	Conclusion	237-244
	Appendix : Dr. Iqbal’s Tribute to Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi	245
	Bibliography	246-253

INTRODUCTION

Development of Islamic Thought before Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

Historically speaking, Islamic thought, which emanates from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet(s), developed by assimilating various modes, methods and patterns, which coincide with the socio-intellectual exigencies of the time. Islamic thought passed through different phases before the advent of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. In its inception, the Islamic thought was simple. It was the Qur'an which served as the basis of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, Ethics etc. The Sunnah of the Prophet(s) being in conformity with the commandments of the Qur'an, served as the valid interpretation of the Qur'an. Belief in Tawhid (Oneness of Allah), the Prophethood of Muḥammad(s), observance of *Salah* (prayer), fasting during the month of *Ramadhan*, the payment of *Zakat*, and pilgrimage to Mekka were the fundamental tenets of Islam. The instructions of the Prophet(s) were obeyed without questioning. In case of any controversy Prophet(s) was consulted who resolved them.

During the classical period of Islam, the Muslims were of one mind in their interpretation of the Qur'an. But the state of affairs did not remain the same, after the demise of Prophet(s) and particularly after the wave of conquests that carried Islam within a century to Samarkand beyond the Oxus, and to Tours in Central France.¹ People belonging to different nationalities, races and religions adopted Islam. The converts tried to interpret the Qur'an according to their own traditional beliefs and customs, with the result differences arose, regarding the various religious-philosophical matters. The main contentious issues were 'the problem of Freedom and Determinism', 'relation of Revelation with Reason', 'relation of Action with beliefs and the Attributes of God'.² The differences on the above issues gave rise to independent schools of Muslim thought.

The Mu'tazilah was the first school of Muslim thought, that discussed the theological problems systematically. The Mu'tazilites came into existence partly as a reaction to the misdeeds of the Umayyads and partly as an attempt to meet the arguments of the Greek and non-Muslim scholars against Islam.³ They were primarily rationalists. They preached Unity of God and to safeguard this unity they denied the Attributes of God as separate from His Essence. They made reason, the absolute criterion of truth and for distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad'. The Mu'tazilites,

¹ D.B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, Delhi, 1973, p. 82.

² Noor Nabi, *Development of Muslim Religious Thought in India*, Delhi, 1980, p.1.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

though desired to defend and understand Islam on the basis of reason but they overdid the job. Their rationalism began to make people sceptic and indifferent to religion.

Owing to the dissatisfaction with the Mu'tazilah doctrines and to safeguard the religion against the attacks of rationalism, eminent personality of Abul Hasan al-'Asha'ri rose on the scene and reacted against the Mu'tazilah doctrines considerably. Ash'arites, as the followers of al-Ash'ari are known, like Mu'tazilites upheld the Unity of God but affirmed His attributes side by side with His essence. They did not undermine the importance of reason but made it subservient to *wahy* (revelation).¹

Meanwhile, the developments in the field of Jurisprudence continued, which had begun when the Prophet and his Companions passed away. In this domain the endeavours of the early jurists of Islam and *Muḥadithin* are a watershed in the history of Islamic thought. The renowned jurists of Islam founded their own schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which were known as *Ḥanafī*, *Maliki*, *Shafī'i* and *Ḥanbali* schools. All of them upheld the primacy of the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the original source of Muslim jurisprudence. The *Ḥanafis* permitted the use of *Ra'y* (speculation) in the interpretation of the Ḥadith; but *Malikes* strongly disapprove of this tendency. Imam Shafī'i critically examined the Ḥadith and laid foundation of the principles of jurisprudence (*Usul-i-Fiqh*). Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal depended extensively on the Ḥadith. He

¹ M.M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1995, pp. 230-231.

also gives due place to *qiyas* (analogical deduction) and *istislah* (seeking of that which is in the public interest).¹

With the beginning of the translation movement of the Greek scientific and philosophical texts during the 'Abbasid reign, Muslims took a considerable interest in formulating their thought on philosophical methods. Many Muslim philosophers such as al-Kindi (d. 251/866), al-Farabi (d. 339/950), Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), Ibn Maskawaih (d. 1030A.D.) in the East, and Ibn Baja (d. 1138AD), Ibn Tufail (d. 1185AD) and Ibn Rushd (d.593/1198) of Spain propounded their own philosophical systems. These philosophical systems were deeply influenced by the Greek philosophy.² They made reason the absolute criterion for true knowledge. They also tried their best to establish harmony between religion and philosophy. Some of them put forward the Emanation Theory of Creation.

As a reaction against the formalism advocated by the jurists and theologians and as a protest against the philosophical doctrines and heresies, a new trend started in the Islamic thought, called sufism or tasawwuf, which by now had become institutional. The essence of tasawwuf was not foreign to Islam. It started due to Muslims' general concern with the purification of the heart. During the time of Prophet(s) a large number of the Companions were leading a life of devotion, piety and seclusion. They were known as *ahl al-suffa*. The saints of this period laid great stress on *Tawakkul* (trust in God) and *Zuhd* (piety), and such men

¹ Abu Zuhra Misri, *Hayat Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal*, (Urdu), Delhi, 1984, p. 120.

² M. 'Abdul Hye, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Delhi, 1989, p. 95.

were known as *zahidun* and *'abidun*. By the end of second century of Hijrah, fear of God and concern for the day of judgement had become the chief characteristic of sufism. However, the love of God, propounded by Rabi'a Baṣri (d.185/801) and Dhu al-Nun Misri (d. 243/859) was not absent. During the reign of 'Abbasids sufism assumed the form of a regular movement. With the advent of Bayazid Bistami and Mansur al-Ḥallaj, sufism tended to monistic doctrine. The former introduced the doctrine of *sukr* (ecstasy), and for the first time employed the word *fana* (annihilation of the self), in sufism.¹ The latter, in continuation of the Bistami's trend, uttered in ecstasy *Ana al-Ḥaqq* (I am the Truth), which served as inspiration and basis for the writings of Ibn al-'Arabi.

Such idiosyncratic views of Bistami and Hallaj, on 'annihilation' and 'Union with God' were strongly reacted by the 'ulama' as well as the general public who considered them unislamic and heretical. Thereof, a new trend characteristic of reform from within started in sufism. As against the doctrine of *fana* and *ma'rifah* (gnosis), the valid knowledge, Junaid of Baghdad (d. 298/910) propounded the doctrine of *baqa* (subsistence) and priority of knowledge over gnosis.² However, in this reformative trend in sufism, the attempts of Imam Ghazali and Sheikh 'Abdul Qadir Jeelani are notable.

Al-Ghazali, for the first time, based tasawwuf on the theory of knowledge.³ To him, tasawwuf is not a way of finding the extra facts

¹ Noor Nabi, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

² Sharif, *op. cit.*, pp. 344-45.

³ Noor Nabi, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

about Reality but is a meaningful way of looking at it as a unit. It is both knowledge and action. He criticized the sufi claim that one reaches God through fusion into or unity with the divine Being. Knowledge of Him is never the knowledge of His self but of His will.¹ In al-Ghazali, there is repudiation of those sufis who preached doctrine of *rahbaniyat* (renunciation of the social life) and non-observance of the shari‘ah.² To Sheikh ‘Abdul Qadir Jilani (1077-1166 AD), there are four stages of spiritual development—stage of piety, reality, resignation and annihilation. To him tasawwuf consists of generosity, cheerful, submission, patience, constant communion with God through prayer, solitude, *faqr*, humility, sincerity and truthfulness.³ Thus both al-Ghazali and ‘Abdul Qadir, while repudiating ascetic and monistic forms of sufism, there is an attempt to present it as a meaningful way of life which affirms both knowledge and action, and obedience to the shari‘ah.

With the establishment of Muslim rule in the sub-continent, sufism flourished throughout the land. In the due course of time sufi orders became popular among the people. Khawaja Mu‘in al-din Chisti (b. 590/1193) founded the Chistiyah order in India, with emphasis on love, simplicity, equality, social justice and *sama‘* (sufi music). The important personalities of the order were Khawaja Bakhtiyar Kaki, Sheikh Nizam al-Din Awliya and Nasir al-din Chirag-i Delhi. The other orders that flourished in India before the advent of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi were

¹ Isma‘il Raj al-Faruqi, *Cultural Atlas of Islam*, New York, 1986, p. 300.

² *Ibid.*

³ Sharif, *op. cit.*, pp. 352-53.

Suhrawardiyah and Qadiriyyah. Sheikh Baha al-din Zakariyyah (578/1128) and Sheikh Sharif al-din Yahya Munairi (d. 728/1380) were the followers of Suhrawardiyah order and Shah Musa Gilani (1002/1593) and Sheikh Abdul Haq Muḥadith Dehlvi (d. 1033/1663) introduced the Qadiriyyah order here. As these two orders have been expounded by their followers, speculative and practical issues about sufism became complex and intricate due to the influence of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujud* (Unity of Being).¹ In the late medieval times, the Naqashbandiyah order was introduced in India by Khawaja Baqi Billah (971-1012/1563-1603). However, the order flourished under the great personality of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, commonly known as *Mujaddid alfi-Thani*.

Born in 971AH/1564 A.D., in Sirhind, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi grew up to manhood during the reign of Akbar. He was deeply perturbed at the religious experiments of Akbar and left no stone unturned in challenging the situation created by political interference in religious life. He criticized severely the *‘Ulama-i Su* (the worldly minded ‘Ulama) and challenged the validity of principles of *ijtihad* (interpretation of Islamic law), followed at the court. In the beginning of Jehangir’s reign he established close contact with eminent Mughal nobles through correspondence and made them realize the nature of heretical developments at the court. He deputed his disciples and *khulafa* to spread his spiritual mission in every important city and town of the Mughal Empire. A large number of *‘ulama*, sufis, scholars, nobles, civil and

¹ Yusuf Husain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, Bombay, 1957, p. 95.

military officials, and common people joined the mystic fold. His success was more marked in the reign of Jehangir, when many of the leading nobles at the court became his devotees.

Sirhindi's thought as expounded in his writings is vivid, dynamic and revivalistic in nature. His thought basically springs from the understanding of the scriptural knowledge (the Qur'an) and its interpretation, the Sunnah of Prophet Muḥammad(s) and *kashf-i-ṣaḥiḥ* (sane sufi experience). For an essentially just estimate of his thought one must consider him with reference to his times. Theology (*kalam*) and tasawwuf (mysticism) are two important aspects of his thought. He expounds the former on the basis of Qur'anic orthodoxy, deeper philosophical plane, as well as through common reason. The Shari'ah and Prophethood, the two important ingredients of his theological thought are dealt by Sirhindi in a comprehensive manner, which reflect his deep understanding of basic sources of Islam. To Sirhindi, tasawwuf is merely a means to an end, the end being complete and unconditional adherence and fidelity to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. His sufi thought, therefore, makes a distinction between the prophetic way and saintly way of God and judges the latter in the light of the former. He severely criticized Ibn al-'Arabi's *waḥdat al-wujud* by declaring it one of the main causes of weakening the edifice of the Faith. His main contribution to the sufi-thought in Islam was his enunciation of a counter theory, popularly known as *waḥdat-al-shuhud* (unity of perception). He opposed *bid'at* (deviation from the accepted practices of the shari'ah), and declared that no spiritual progress was

possible without closely following the path indicated by the Prophet, i.e., Sunnah.

His thought put an impact on the cross-section of society, viz., masses, scholars, sufis, and statesmen, leading to the reformation and renewed life in the body-politic of Islam. For this reason his contemporaries, both 'ulama and sufis, accept Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi as the most important religio-spiritual leader of the Muslims and addressed him with the title of *Mujaddid Alf-i Thani*, the Renewer of the second millennium of Islam.¹

The personality of the Mujaddid has remained a source of attraction to the scholars of the past and the present. A great number of works have been written on the Mujaddid. Among the earliest works *Zubdat al-Maqamat* of Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi and *Hadhrat al-Quds* of Badr al-Din Sirhindi deserve special mention. The former work appeared within three years of Sirhindi's death (1034/1624) whereas the latter was completed in 1052/1642. The authors of both these works owed spiritual allegiance to Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. They also serve as the primary source for the present work, particularly for the biography of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. In the modern times a number of works (books and articles) have been produced on the various aspects of the life, thought, spiritual experiences and practices of Sirhindi. The works of

¹ According to Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, it was Mulla 'Abdul Hakim of Sailkot (d. 1067 AH), the most illustrious scholar of the day and the *Sheikh al-Islam* of India, who was first to apply Sheikh Ahmad the epithet of *Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thani*. (Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, *The Mujaddidi's Conception of Tawhid*, Delhi, 1977, p. 3).

Sheikh Muhammad Ikram (*Rud-i-Kauthar*), Burhan Ahmad Faruqi (*The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhid*), Manzoor Nu'mani (*Tadhkira Imam Rabbani Mujaddid Alf Thani*), Muhammad Farman (*Hayat Mujaddid*), Shah Zawwar Husain (*Hadhrat Mujaddid Alf Thani*), Muhammad Mas'ud Ahmad (*Seerat Mujaddid Alf Thani*), Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi (*Tarikh Da'wat wa 'Azimat*), Yohanan Friedmann (*Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi*), Ghulam Mustafa Khan, (*Hadhrat Mujaddid Alf Thani—Aik Tarikhi Ja'iza*), Ahsan-u-Allah 'Abbasi (*Sawanih 'Umri Hadhrat Mujaddid Alf Thani*), and Athar 'Abbas Rizvi (*Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*), have attracted the notice of the contemporary scholars. Besides there are some other works in English and Urdu which throw light on some aspects of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. However, the need of a comprehensive work dealing with all aspects of his life and thought and particularly study of his impact on the political and religious life of the period and on the later generations, has been a desideratum. This work is a humble attempt to fill this gap.

The present work attempts at the analytical study of thought of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. The study focuses on theological and sufi thought of Sirhindi, which is essentially revivalistic (*tajdidi*) in nature. In the work, the 'Theological Thought' has been used in comprehensive sense. In addition to all the fundamental concepts about God, Universe and Man, it also includes the explication of the Shari'ah, reassertion of the Prophethood and a review of the Muslim sects. The study also focuses on the impact of Sirhindi's thought on the development of sufi, political,

religious and social thought of his contemporary and succeeding generations. The *Maktubat* of Sirhindi and his other works have been mainly utilized as primary source to examine the various aspects of his thought. The writings on and about Sirhindi by the later scholars have also been utilized as the secondary sources of study. The study follows the historical methodology. The work has been divided into following chapters:

Chapter I. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi : The Milieu

The chapter studies in detail the milieu of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. It makes a survey of the political, social and religious conditions of the age in which Sirhindi was brought up. It describes the various reformist movements of the period, and the trends of thought emerging out of Akbar's religious experiments, which played a part in shaping the thought of Sirhindi.

Chapter II. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi : Life and Works

The chapter gives an account of the family background, early life of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, his meeting with Baqi Billah and the latter's impact on his career. It also describes Sirhindi's initiation into the Naqashbandiyah silsilah and his role in propagation and spread of the *Silsila* in India. The concluding part of the chapter gives an introduction of the works of Sirhindi.

Chapter III. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi : Theological Thought I

The chapter describes in detail the concept of God, Universe and Man. According to Sirhindi God is pure, absolute and transcendental. To him, independent attributes are not at all essential for God as an absolute being. About Universe, Sirhindi holds that it is the creation of God and He has created it out of nothing and is completely dependent upon Him. He rejects the theories of Emanation and eternity of the Universe. The chapter lastly discusses the concept of Man, as elaborated by Sirhindi. Sirhindi speaks of the nature of Man and his relation to God. He says that soul belongs to the realm of command (*Amr*). He further says that since soul comes from God and belongs to the world of command (*'Alim-i-Amr*), it is therefore transcendental and unique as compared to physical bodies. Soul is the essence of human personality and is connected with both the spiritual and sensual world, and is immortal. The chapter finally discusses Sirhindi's view on the most important point of Islamic theology, i. e., the relationship between the Act of God (*Takwin*) and the human action.

Chapter IV. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi : Theological Thought II

The chapter has been divided into three parts. The first part discusses the 'Explication of the Shari'ah'. In it Sirhindi's view that Shari'ah is all comprehensive, encompassing minutest details of this world and the next, has been discussed in detail. He asserts that Shari'ah is superior to *ṭariqah* and the latter is subservient to the former. The second part of the chapter—Re-assertion of the Prophethood, discusses the

need and importance of Prophethood in Islam. It studies the causes that lead Sirhindi to re-assert the vitality and indispensability of the institution of the Prophethood in Islam. He upholds that the Prophethood is superior to sainthood. The third part of the chapter—Review of the Muslim Sects, highlights Sirhindi's views on the two major sects of Muslims i.e., *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'* and the Sh'ias.

Chapter V. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi : Sufi Thought

The chapter begins with the historical development of sufi thought in Islam. The chapter describes in detail the *wahdat al-shuhud* philosophy of Sirhindi. In order to have better understanding of Sirhindi's philosophy, Ibn al-'Arabi's philosophy of *wahdat al-wujud* has been briefly discussed in the background. It concludes with the assertion that mystic experience as well as theological reason are subject to the test of revelation.

Chapter VI. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi : Impact

The chapter traces the impact of Sirhindi's thought on his contemporaries and posterity, under various sub-headings. In the first place, the impact on the development of sufism has been dealt in detail. His impact lead to the foundation of two new Orders—*Tariqa al-Muhammadiya* and *Silsilah Mujaddidiya*. The Naqashbandiya silsilah developed on the lines chalked out by Sirhindi. His sufi thought influenced Sayyid Ahmad Barailwi, Shah Wali-Ullah, Shah Isma'il and others. The impact of *wahdat al-shuhud* philosophy lead to the scrutiny of

wahdat al-wujud philosophy. The spread of his discipleship and their role in disseminating the thought of Sirhindi has also been discussed. Sirhindi's impact on the Mughal polity has been discussed in detail and his efforts lead to a definite change in the religious policy of the Mughal Empire, has been highlighted. His impact on the social practices and on the religious learning has also been discussed. Finally, Sirhindi's impact on the contemporary thinkers like Dr. Iqbal and Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, has also been discussed.

Chapter VII. Conclusion

The last chapter sums up the thought of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

CHAPTER I.

SHEIKH AHMAD SIRHINDI : THE MILIEU

Every individual, (or a group) is deeply influenced by the environment of his age in which he is brought up.

The contemporary thought, trends and movements play an important part in the development of one's personality and deeply influence the ideas, actions and other aspects-both inward and outward, of the life of an individual. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi is no exception to this principle. He too seems to have been either influenced or come in conflict with many social, political and religious trends of his time. Thus all the features of contemporaneous society have motivated Sirhindi's thought and ideology. So before studying the life, thought and the religious as well as mystic activities of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, it is appropriate to study the milieu of Sirhindi in order to evaluate and appreciate in a proper way the development of his ideology and its impact on the broad features of existing religious thought.

Mahdawi Movement

Fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of Christian era in India saw mushroom growth of new sects, new philosophies and new religious approaches.¹ Among them Mahdawi movement was the most important of the time. This movement exercised great influence upon the contemporary Muslim society and attracted large number of supporters to its fold. Its founder was Syed Muhammad of Jaunpur. Though there have been some other persons in India who claimed themselves to have been promised *Mahdi*², but Syed Muhammad achieved great success as a claimant to this position.

Syed Muhammad, the founder of the movement was born on 14th *Jamade Awal* 847/ 9th Sep. 1443 in Jaunpur during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Sharqi (840/1436-7 - 862/1457-8). He started his early education under Sheikh Daniyal at the age of four years, four months and four days. After memorizing the entire holy Qur'an, he gained mastery over all traditional sciences and at the age of twelve he received the title of '*Asad al-'Ulama*' (the lion of scholars), from his teacher.³ It is reported that since his very boyhood Syed Muhammad used to receive divine calls informing him that he was the promised *Mahdi*.⁴ His learning, piety and impressive personality strongly influenced everyone with whom he came

¹ K.A.Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, Delhi, 1989, p. 28.

² In Feroz Shah's reign, a man whose name was Rukn claimed to be a *Mahdi*. But he did not arouse much response and was executed. For details see, Sultan Feroz Shah, *Futuhati Feroz Shahi* (ed. Shaykh Ab. Rashid), Aligarh, 1954, pp. 7-8

³ Abdur Rahman, *Sirat Imam Mahdi Mau'ud*, Hyderabad, 1369AH, p. 5ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

in contact. All the contemporary and later sources praise his spiritual and intellectual greatness. Though many did not believe him to be the promised *Mahdi*, but all readily accepted him as a “perfect guide” and a saint.¹ Large number of his contemporary ‘ulama and scholars, both in India and abroad, are said to have been highly impressed by his scholarship and spiritual attainments.² Even Sultan Husain Sharqi (1458-79) was deeply impressed by him and got himself enrolled as Syed Muhammad’s disciple.

In 887/1482 Syed Muhammad left Jaunpur, under a divine inspiration for Mandu. On his way near Denapur, his wife, son and a follower declared him as a *Mahdi*. Though the later confirmed their inspiration but advised them to make the declaration at the proper time.³ After he reached Mandu in 892/1486-7 via Kalpi and Chanderi, he attracted a large number of people and even sultan Ghiyasuddin Khilji towards his fold.⁴

Later on, he came to Bidar, where he left deep impression upon some eminent ‘ulama who thought him to be the promised *Mahdi*. After visiting some other places in Deccan for some time, Syed Muhammad left for Mekka with his 360 followers in 901/ 1495-96. There

¹ Syed Athar ‘Abbas Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of Muslims in Akbar's Reign*, Delhi, 1975, p.56.

² Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Lucknow, 1892, Vol. III, p. 174; Badayuni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Calcutta, 1869, Vol. III, p. 67; Also Syed Athar ‘Abbas Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*, Agra, 1965, pp. 78-79.

³ Rehman, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-47.

he openly declared in the premises of Ka'ba, that he was the *Mahdi*.¹ It was his first open declaration of his claim--to be a *Mahdi*. Then Syed Muhammad returned to India and stayed at Ahmadabad for about eighteen months.² He also traveled over Jaisalmar, Negaur and Nasrpur in Sind and made a sojourn at Thatta for few months. Then he marched towards Khurasan where he was hailed by large crowd and even by kings and rulers of various places.³ Syed Muhammad died on Monday, the 19th *Ziqa'da* 910/27th April 1505 at Farah in Iran.⁴

The Mahdawi's instead of following the four famous schools of Islamic Jurisprudence, laid stress on directly consulting and following the Qur'an and the Hadith, as the basic sources of Islam. The Mahdawi spiritual discipline was based upon the following principles-*Tarki Duniya* (renunciation of the world), '*Uzlat az-Khalq* (seclusion from mankind), *Tawakkul* (trust in God), *Talab-i didar-i-Haq* (quest for the vision of God), '*Ushr* (distribution of one tenth of income in charity), *Zikr* (constant meditation and repetition of the names of Allah, loudly and quietly), and *Hijrat* (migration for religious purpose).⁵ For the propagation of their teachings, the Mahdawis established special settlements called *daeras*, where people were trained according to the Mahdawi doctrine. These *daeras* became the hub of activities in the propagation of Syed

¹ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of Muslims in Akbar's Reign*, p. 56.

² Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*, p. 85.

³ Rahman, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-122.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.139.

⁵ Syed Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, *Tarikh Da'wat wa 'Azimat*, Vol. IV, Lucknow, 1988, p. 59

Muhammad's doctrines. The main centers of Mahdwis were in Gujrat, Sind, Biyana and Kalpi.

At the out-set it is maintained that Syed Muhammad did not found any new religion or sect. He is reported to have said that his main object was to restore Islam to its pristine purity. Syed Muhammad raised his voice for the revival of shari'ah and the establishment of the lawfulness. But some scholars are of the opinion that the movement could not continue in the original form for a long period.¹ The concept of Mahdawiyat clashed with the concept of *Khatm-i Nubuwwat*, (finality of the Prophethood), which is one of the basic principles of Islam. Ultimately, many 'ulama of the time started to oppose and condemn it.² The greatest scholar of the age, Muhammad Tahir of Pattan (913/1507-986/1578), the author of the *Majm'a Bahar al-Anwar*, declared under an oath that he would not put on his turban until he had completely rooted out the false doctrine, which had overrun the whole of Gujrat.³

Like other contemporary 'ulama, Sirhindi too could not remain a silent spectator towards the infuriative doctrines of Mahdawi movement. He too thought the Mahdawi movement and its principles injurious to Islam and the Muslims. He vehemently criticized them in his various letters. He says, "Any type of laziness and negligence in the task

¹ K.A. Nizami, *Hayat-i-Shaikh 'Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlawi*, Delhi, 1964, pp. 271-72. Nadwi also upholds the same view. See Nadwi, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

² *Ibid.*

³ Quoted by Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 61; also see, Ishtiyak Husain Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent*, Delhi, 1985, pp. 152-53

of religious propagation leads to the encouragement of innovators and even creates hindrance in the way of Islam. It is only because of this negligence and laziness that the Mahdawis are openly preaching their faith by inviting true Muslims to their false faith; as soon as they get opportunity they take one or two Muslims to their fold”.¹ In another letter he writes, “Some foolish people think that the person who emerged amongst the Indian Muslims and claimed himself to be the promised *Mehdi* was the real *Mahdi*. They also think that the *Mahdi* was expired and that his (the *Mahdi*’s) grave is in Fara. All the reliable traditions (ahadith) totally deny and reject the claims of these persons, as the features described by the Holy Prophet of Islam, do not at all fit in his case. It is very regrettable that, due to ignorance people are going astray, instead of knowing everything correct and clear about the concept of promised *Mahdi*”.²

Roshana‘iyah Movement

The other sect which assumed great importance just before Sirhindi’s period in Mughal India was the Roshana‘iyah movement. Its founder was Bayazid Ansari,³ also known as *Pir Roshan* (the saint of

¹ Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*, Vol. II., Letter No. 15.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 67

³ He was born in Jalandher in 1525/ 932. He belonged to a Qazi family, which claimed descent from Abu Ayyub Ansari, the famous companion of the Prophet of Islam. (Tariq Ahmad, *The Raushaniya Movement*, Delhi, 1982, p. 32). His father, after his birth, shifted to Kaniguram in South Afghanistan, where Bayazid was brought up. Since his very boyhood, Bayazid’s mind was more concerned about metaphysical and ontological problems than ordinary problems of religion. Later on he independently started trade and in this connection he had to travel frequently between Samarqand and India. In one of his travels, it is reported that he met one Mulla Sulaiman, an Isma‘ili, and spent some time with the Hindu Yogis. (Nadwi, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-58). Contd. on p.21.....

light). Bayazid Ansari's teachings represent a curious mixture of sufi, Mahdawi and Isma'li traditions. He had clear awareness of his needs and picked up from the various religious ideologies the elements, which could be of help to him. He took such elements which could augment his religious prestige and establish his superiority over the people. Ideologically Bayazid drew sustenance for his movement from the concept of "*waḥdat al-wujūd*". But the way in which he gave expression to his *wujudi* ideas could not but be criticized by the orthodox section. "In fact", writes Tariq Ahmad, "much of the criticism which Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi leveled against the concept of '*waḥdat al-wujūd*' was due to ideas as expressed by persons with immature spiritual experiences like Bayazid Ansari".¹

Bayazid maintained that, through constant *Zikr* (recitation of the name of God) and meditation, union could be established with the Creator. Contrary to the thought of sufis that union of God and man was possible only in rare movements of ecstasy, Bayazid preached the

.....Contd. from p. 20.

He is said to have been deeply influenced by the Isma'ili thought. He soon began to feel that he had some great mission to fulfil and engaged himself in *Zikr Khafi* (silent remembrance). He, therefore, claimed having achieved *Qurbat* (nearness to God). At the age of forty he heard a mysterious voice telling him to give up the ritual purity demanded by the shari'ah and to perform the prayers like the prophets of God instead of the usual prayers of the Muslims. Thereafter he started to look down others as polytheists and hypocrites. He mostly remained busy in meditation. According to Tariq Ahmad, "mystic contemplation made Bayazid ego-centric and he began to consider himself superior to others". Consequently people started to oppose him. Later he journeyed through various cities and towns of Afghanistan and Central Asia. Ultimately he settled down in Peshawar, which proved receptive to Bayazid's doctrines and was successful in winning over the Afghans there. (Tariq Ahmad, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-40)

¹ Tariq Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

permanence of Union. According to him God is Omnipresent and every existing object and creation is His form.¹ To Bayazid there are six stages, which could lead man to salvation. In his *Hal Namah*, he mentioned these stages of spiritual development as *Shari'ah*, *Tariqat*, *Haqiqat*, *Ma'rifat*, *Qurbat*, *Wasalat* and *Sakunat*.² Bayazid also laid stress on the necessity of having a *pir*. According to him obeying the *pir* meant obeying the Prophet and God.³

In 1545 A.D., Bayazid started enrolling disciples. He declared to his followers that he had been sent by God to educate his people. He claimed that he had acquired spiritual perfection directly. He appointed *khalifas* and sent *da'is* (missionaries) to propagate his teachings and to enroll disciples. He wrote and sent various treatises to his contemporary rulers, saints and 'ulama, and invited them to join his religious discipline.⁴ Bayazid had also compiled a book entitled *Khair al-Bayan*,⁵ which he used to show and teach to his disciples after fully examining their devotion to himself and completely gripping their attention to his thought and practices. It appears that the brochure dealt with Bayazid's secret spiritual and prophetic attainments. He is said to have legalized the assassination and murder of non-Roushinyes. According to him, whosoever does not know himself and God, he is to be

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁵ His two other books which are still extant are *Maqsud al-Muminin* and *Sirat al-Tawhid*.

reckoned a wolf, a tiger, a serpent or a scorpion; and the Prophet has said, "Kill harmful creature before it causes harm". He would say that such a person whether of good conduct or performer of *Namaz*, was to be considered as an ox or a sheep and the killing of such a creature is lawful.¹

While analyzing the Roshaniyah sect, Nadwi writes, "the doctrines that Sheikh Bayazid has himself mentioned in the *Sirat al-Tawhid* seems to be the outcome of an excessive reliance on mysticism as well as his own self-complacency which are not unoften found in those who want to go ahead with vigils and devotions on the path of spiritual flight unaided by an experienced guide but have little knowledge of the Qur'an and the Sunnah".²

So far as the Mughal-Roshaniyah relations were concerned, the Mughals in the initial stage adopted a policy of wait and watch. As soon as the movement assumed dimensions which directly or indirectly threatened Mughal interests in the region, this policy was abandoned by the Mughals. The founder of the movement himself died in 980/1572 at Kala Pani, while fighting the Mughals.³ After his death, his sons continued to pose danger to the Mughal Empire. The sect was finally suppressed during the reign of Shah Jahan in 1058/1648.⁴

¹ Tariq Ahmad, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

² Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

³ Tariq Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁴ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

Naqtawi Movement

Another movement which influenced the sixteenth century society of Iran and India, and even the thought of Emperor Akbar, was the “Naqtawi movement”.¹ It owed its origin to Mahmud Pasikhani of Iran (ob. 800/1397). Many Naqtawis were reported to have migrated to India in fear of persecution in Iran by the sh‘ia rulers.² Some of them joined Akbar’s court as well. Badayuni says that some of the court poets in Akbar’s reign were Naqtawis.³ Abul Fazl had correspondence with Naqtawis of Iran.⁴ The Naqtawi attitude towards Islam and the shari‘ah was far from respectful. They ridiculed many practices like *Haj* and the fast of *Ramzan* etc. The Naqtawis recited some prayers with their face towards the sun.⁵ They believed in the transmigration of the souls, rejected the idea of Resurrection and questioned the concept of the Day of Judgement. Their attitude towards the Qur‘an was heretical, as they believed it to be the word of the Prophet of Islam.⁶ They also claimed that “Islam having been revoked, everyone had to accept the religion of Mahmud” and that, “Islam having run out its life’s duration, a new religion was the need of the time”.⁷

¹ For details of the Naqtawi movement in Iran see Nazir Ahmad, *Tarikhi Wa Adabi Maqile*, Aligarh, 1961, pp. 5-8; also see M. Aslam, *Din Ilahi Aur Is Ka Pasmanzer*, Delhi, 1969, pp. 163-77.

² Askander Munshi, *Tarikh-i-Aalam Ara-i-‘Abbasi*, Vol.II, Tehran, 1314 A.H., p. 325.

³ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, p. 205

⁴ Aslam, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁵ Muhsin Khani, *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, (tr. David Shea and A. Trayer), Lucknow, 1881, p. 300.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

⁷ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

The Naqtawis found a congenial atmosphere in India where Akbar's court had become a place for all free thinkers. Sharif 'Amli, who represented the Naqtawis at Akbar's court, attracted many of the courtiers to his religious fold. He also had deep impact upon Faizi and Abul Fazl.¹

Bhakti Movement

Yet another significant development in the religious life of medieval India was the emergence of Bhakti movement. It was essentially a revolt against religious discrimination, social inequality, caste distinction and ecclesiastical formalism. The main exponents of this movement were Kabir, Chaitonya, Dadu, Pipo and Dhanna. They all belonged to the low-caste Hindu society.² They were bitter critics of all caste concepts.

Many Islamic ideas permeated the thought and behaviour of the saints of the Bhakhti cult, as at one stage or at the other, they in their lives had come in contact with the Muslim saints.³ They had been influenced by the sufi concept of 'Love of God' and humility. Many other Islamic ideas and practices were adopted by these Bhakhti saints. They used the language of common people to communicate their ideas. A number of Arabic and Persian words are found in their religious works.

¹ Aslam, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

² Kabir was a weaver, Sa'in was a barber, Rai Das was a leather-worker, Dadda was a cleaner. (K. A. Nizami, *State and Culture in Medieval India*, Delhi p. 297).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

The *Guru-granth*, the Dadupanthi and Niranjanpanthi literature, for instance, contain sayings of both Hindu and Muslim religious thinkers.¹

The ideas and thought of Bhakti saints had far-reaching socio-religious significance. They preached that all religions had same goal before them.² The spiritual mentor (*guru*) should be treated as the supreme authority.³ They were of the view that the relationship between God and *Manwis* was the same as between waves and the sea. They believed that the transmigration of the souls was the real cycle of life; and out-ward formalities of religion had no value.⁴ One should strive for the interiorization of religious rights.⁵

The thought of Bhakti saints also affected the Muslim society of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Many Muslims of immature mystic mind felt attracted towards the Bhakti movement and its saints. Daddu's disciple Rajab Das (1567-1689) is an interesting example of the impact of Bhakti cult on Muslim mind. He was a Muslim with Rajab 'Ali as his original name.⁶

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi did not compromise with such ideas and developments. When a Hindu, Hriday Ram sought clarification from the Sheikh about similarity between God, Lord Rama and Lord Krishna as

¹ *Ibid.*

² Sheikh Muhammad Ikram, *Aab-i-Kauthar*, Delhi, 1991, p. 465.

³ Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Allahabad, 1946, p. 158.

⁴ Nizami, *State and Culture in Medieval India*, p. 296.

⁵ Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, pp. 35-36

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32

the Hindus believe in, the Sheikh vehemently rejected it saying that, “it is foolishness to know Ram and Rahman as one. Creature cannot be equal to Creator”.¹

The Mystic Philosophy of Ibn al-‘Arabi

The mystic thought of Sheikh Muhi al-Din Ibn al-‘Arabi was the pivotal point of Muslim religious thought in medieval India. His works specially the *Fusus al-Hikam* and *Fatuhah-i Makkiya*, exerted great influence on the Muslim mind and were accepted in the mystic circles as the guide books for one who set out on a journey of the uncharted ocean of mystic experience.² It is reported that the ideas of the *Sheikh-i-Akbar* (Ibn al-‘Arabi) were introduced in India through Sheikh Fakhruddin Iraqi, a disciple of Sheikh Bahaddin Zakariya of Multan. Iraqi had attended the lectures of Maulana Sadruddin Qunwi, who was a brilliant advocate of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s thought. In the beginning many commentaries were written on Ibn-i Arabi’s thought in Arabic,³ so that his ideas did not reach the spiritually immature persons and create an atmosphere of religious anarchy. In the early centuries the mystic teachers took care not to associate the common people in the abstruse mystic thought of Ibn al-‘Arabi as it was generally believed that *wajudi* ideas, if not properly

¹ Sirhindi, *op. cit.* Vol. I, Letter No. 167.

² For a detailed study of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s thought, see, K.A. Nizami, *Tarikhi Maqalat*, Delhi, 1966, pp. 24-31. Also *Salatin-i Delhi Ke Mazhabi Ruhjanat*, Dehli, 1981, pp. 412-14; Sharif, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-418.

³ For instance, Syed ‘Ali Hamadani wrote a commentary on *Fusus al-Hikam* in Arabic. Abul Muhsin Sharafuddin of Delhi’s ‘*Ain ul-Fusus Sharh al-Fusus*’; Sheikh Pir ‘Ali Muhaimis (d. 835/ 1431), *Sharh al-Khasus fi Shar al-Fusus li Ibn al-‘Arabi*, etc. For details see, Nizami, *Tarikhi Maqalat*, pp. 24-31.

understood and assimilated, could give birth to heretical movements. But in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries this cautious attitude was abandoned and pantheistic ideas of Ibn al-‘Arabi became a current coin. Masud Bakk, who was executed at the orders of Firoz Shah Tughluq, gave expression to pantheistic ideas in his *Diwan Nur al-Ain* and a mystic treatise known as *Mirat al-‘Arifin*. According to Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhadith of Delhi no one before Masud Bakk discussed mystic secrets as openly as he did.¹ It appears that during the time of Sheikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi, the *Diwan* of Masud Bakk was widely read.²

The impact of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s thought is clearly discernible in Indo-Muslim religious thought during the sixteenth century. Sheikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi started open discussions about pantheistic philosophy. Commentaries on Ibn al-‘Arabi’s works were written in Persian. Sheikh Amanullah Panipati started giving instructions to people in the *Fusus al-Hikam* and *Futuh-i-Makkiya*.³ The impact of his teachings and sermons was so deep and effective that when Sheikh ‘Abdul Haq’s father Sheikh Saif al-Din reached his *Khanqah*, he started crying, “Everything is God”.⁴ According to *Gulzar-i-Abrar*, the Afghans were also very interested in the ideas of *Sheikh-i-Akbar*. Daulat Khan Lodi’s son went to Syed Ahmad Afghani in order to seek elucidation of some ideas of Ibn al-‘Arabi.⁵

¹ Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith, *Akhbar al-Akhyar*, Delhi, p. 169.

² Nizami, *Tarikhi Maqalat*, pp. 24-31.

³ Muhammad Ghaus Shattari, *Gulzar-i Abrar* (Urdu Tr.), Agra, p. 266.

⁴ ‘Abdul Haq Muhaddith, *op. cit.*, pp. 293-95.

⁵ Shattari, *op. cit.*, pp. 551-52.

The impact of pantheistic ideas on Muslim religious thought had some delicate implications. If not properly controlled, it encouraged the development of unconventional religious ideas, weakened the sentiments of adherents of the *shari'ah* and also encouraged fissiparous tendencies. It is significant that many of the movements of the period, which in one way or the other deviated from the orthodox path, drew inspiration from Ibn al-'Arabi's works and his pantheistic ideas.¹ It appears that some writings of Ibn al-'Arabi were brought to the notice of Akbar and he was also inspired by them.

When Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi organized his revivalistic movement, he trenchantly criticized the ideas of Ibn al-'Arabi. If his thought as expressed in his *Maktubat* is analyzed, it would appear that he considered the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* as the source of all waywardness in religious life. He believed that the currency of pantheistic ideas among the Muslims was bound to shaken their faith in shari'ah law. The concept of *wahdat al-wujud* will be discussed in detail in the fifth chapter of the dissertation.

State of Christians and Christianity

It will be worthwhile to mention the state of Christians and Christianity of the sixteenth century Indian sub-continent. Apart from the conversion of thousands of people, both Hindu and Muslims, to this religion, the ruling class of the period was also inclined towards its

¹ Qureshi, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

preachers. Emperor Akbar was convinced that Christian principles must possess exceptional value and influence over the hearts of men.¹ In 1577, he first came into contact with 'Pietro Taveres', a Portuguese officer who visited Akbar's court along with his wife. It is said that his sound sense and upright conduct won him the favour and esteem of the Emperor.² Father Julian Pereiria, the Vicar-general of Bengal, openly exposed "the errors of Islam". Akbar was so much impressed by the Christian teachings that he requested the priest (Pereiria) to teach him Portuguese and the Christian doctrine.³ But it seems that both these Christian priests could not satisfy the Emperor. Accordingly, he decided to make arrangements for obtaining instructions from fully qualified experts. In December 1578, Akbar sent 'Abdullah Khan as his envoy, to the Portuguese authorities at Goa and dispatched a letter requesting them to send to him two learned men along with books of law, and above all, the Gospel.⁴ The Emperor in his letter assured them of full honour and protection. The Portuguese too, without any action on their own part, found the door suddenly thrown open to them by the King himself. Hearing his keen interest in Christianity, the Jesuits thought it better and good fortune to send their representatives.⁵ V. A. Smith says, "A king so great and a kingdom so extensive to the glory of the Church and the benefit of Portugal was not to

¹ V. A. Smith, *Akbar, The Great Mogul*, Delhi, 1966, p. 97.

² Nowroze Cooverji Mehta, *The Religious Policy of Akbar*, Bombay, 1946, p. 74.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Abul Fazl, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 423.

⁵ Mehta, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

be neglected”.¹ Hence their first mission, consisting of Father Rudolph Aquamiva,² as head of the mission, Antony Monserate,³ as second in command and Francis Hanriquez, who was a Persian convert from Islam and a native of Ormuz, as interpreter and assistant, was despatched by the Portuguese Viceroy to the Mughal court. They reached Fatehpur Sikri on 28th Feb., 1580. Akbar received them with marks of friendship and accorded a warm welcome to this first Christian mission by entertaining in various ways.⁴ They received royal treatment at the hands of the Emperor and his officers. The Fathers were given the complete facilities and in case of difficulties they could consult Abul Fazl who was appointed to look after their comforts. They were put up in the palace and shared food on the royal table. The Emperor personally looked after them.⁵ He would shake hands with them most familiarly and would call them apart from the ordinary retainers and indulge with them in private talks.⁶

¹ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

² An Italian by birth, he was the bader of the first Christian mission to Akbar's Court. He arrived at Goa from Europe at the time when Akbar's ambassador reached there from Fatehpur Sikri. Though barely 30 at that time, showing his willingness to visit the Mughal court, he was sent there. He returned to Goa in 1583 and thence went to the adjoining territory of Salsette where he was beset by a Hindu mole and murdered. Monserrate praises his piety and secluded habits. (Mehta, *op. cit.*, p. 74)

³ Born in 1536 in Catalonia, he has been described by one of his biographers as a man of extreme humility and a saintly person. He was appointed tutor to Prince Murad and accompanied Akbar on his expedition against his brother Mirza Hakeem, but he died in the way at Jalalabad

⁴ Denison Ross and Eileen Power, *Akbar and the Jesuits*, (Translated with introduction and notes by C.H. Payne), Delhi, 1979, p. 18.

⁵ Mehta, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 75.

Akbar received from these Fathers the gift of a magnificently bound copy of Bible of Planty in several volumes and in four languages (printed in 1569-72), and treated these scriptures with great reverence.¹ Thereafter, Akbar asked them to hold discussions in the 'Ibadat Khana', where they entered in many disputes with 'ulama and mashayikh.² These Christian priests, particularly father Monserrate, gave an ugly exhibition of bad taste. The questions like 'the finality of the Qur'anic Revelation', 'the prophecy of the Prophet of Islam', 'the Resurrection', 'the nature of Divinity', and the conception of the 'Unity of God', were subjected to severe criticism. They openly attacked Islam in rude and offensive language and even used foul words against its Prophet.³ They are also reported to have advised Akbar to ban the Qur'an and its study in his dominion.⁴ Badayuni says, "Ringing of the conch (*Naqoos*) of the Christians, and showing of the figure of the Trinity and Cribs which is their sign of mirth, and other childish play-things (*lahw-o-la'b*) were in daily practice. And the infidelity (*kufr*) became common and historic".⁵ Akbar also commanded his artists to copy the pictures of Christ and the Virgin Mary, which the fathers had with them, and directed to make a box of gold to keep them.⁶

¹ Dennison Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 16; also Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol II, p. 260.

⁴ Shah Nawaz Khan, *Muiathir al-Umara*, tr, H. Beveridge, Vol. II, Patna, 1979, p. 217.

⁵ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

⁶ Dennison Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

These Christian priests were allowed to build Chapel near the Royal palace. Akbar himself visited them privately with every mark of respect. He also gave his second son Murad, then only ten years old, to father Monserrate, to be taught the Portuguese language and the Christian morals.¹ The missionaries were given full liberty to preach their religion publicly at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. According to Sir Edward Maclagan, the fullest liberty of making conversions to Christianity was also given to them.² They did all in their power to persuade Emperor Akbar to declare himself a Christian.³

Their attitude was so uncompromising and fanatical that in the words of Vincent Smith, "Nothing but strong protection of the Emperor could have preserved their lives".⁴ Smith rightly indicates that the Emperor's great favour and undue regards to these Christians as well as their rude behaviour, insulting and hostile attitude to Islam and Muslims, and offensive remarks for the Holy Prophet of Islam greatly antagonized Akbar's rivals and opponents, and even preluded the rebellions in Bengal, Bihar and Kabul. To quote Smith, "As a matter of fact, their presence at court, the marked favour shown to them by the sovereign, and the licence to their language, helped to influence the discontent which found expression in two formidable rebellions,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24; Badayuni, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, p. 260.

² Sir Edward Mclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*, London, 1932, p. 32.

³ Dannison Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁴ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

undoubtedly dangerous to both the throne and life of Akbar.”¹ Though these rebellions had pulled down the *Ibadat Khana*, yet Akbar, after their suppression, resumed its proceedings for a short time and renewed the discussions about the relative values of the Qur‘an and the *Bible*. He wished the controversy to be continued to discover as to which religion, either Islam or Christianity, was the truer and sounder. These discussions, as observes R.P. Tripathi, “Led to all kinds of rumours and apprehensions not only among the outsiders, but also among those who participated in them.”² Gradually the attendance dwindled in the House of Worship until the fathers alone came. Ultimately they also found that it was not worthwhile to attend the debates and they came to an end in 1582 AD.

In 1590 AD, a second Portuguese mission arrived at the royal court. It was received with utmost respect and paid much attention. Five years later, in 1595, a third Portuguese mission came to Akbar’s court at Lahore. He paid them extra-ordinary personal honour, permitting the Jesuits not only to be seated in his presence, but to occupy part of the cushion on which he himself and heir to the throne would sit. They were also exempted from performing the ceremony of the prostration before the Emperor.³ He willingly accepted a book written by Father Xaview, member of the third mission, on the life and doctrines of Christ, gave complete freedom of worship to the Jesuits.⁴ Akbar embraced images of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

² R.P. Tripathi, *The Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Allahabad, 1985, p. 250.

³ Dennison Ross, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-51

⁴ Mehta, *op. cit.*, p. 75

their Lord and the Blessed Virgin, and kept them for a long time in his arms. He also attended litany service in the Chapel and exhibited special devotion to them.¹ The Father tried to lead the Emperor to many sinful acts, which Islam forbade to be committed and suggested him for declaring the Qur'an false and untrustworthy.²

They were also allowed to build churches at Agra, Lahore and other distant places of the Mughal Empire.³ In 1603 Akbar allowed these Portuguese Christian missionaries to make willing conversions. Father Pinheiro is stated to have succeeded in converting a Syed, a Shaikh-who had been to Mekka and after his conversion went from Lahore to Agra to assist the Fathers in conversions, a mother and a daughter of the tribe of the Chaghatai. Several conversions were made from persons of lower strata.⁴ Thus we see that Emperor Akbar was so much attracted towards the Christianity and the Christian missionaries that he not only himself deviated from the teachings of Islam, but it had repercussions on the Muslims and Islam itself.

So far as any clash or conflict between Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi and the missionaries is concerned, we don't find any reference in this direction. But it is presumed that the Sheikh, who had been for several years to the Mughal capital and associated with many nobles and

¹ Dennison Ross, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-71.

² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³ R.S. Sharma, *Religious Policy of the Mughal Rulers*, Bombay, 1962, p. 37; Mehta, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

⁴ *Ibid.*, (Mehta), p. 79

officials, surely might have been in know of the activities of the Christian priests at Agra and other places. It can easily be supposed that the close contacts of the Christian missionaries with Akbar and other dignitaries of the Mughal Empire, and the spread of missionaries, especially the conversion of innocent Muslims must have been great concern to him. Nevertheless, he might not have taken the issue as dangerous and threatening to Islam and Muslims in India as Hinduism, its mystic ideology and political dominance.

Akbar and Hinduism

The forces of Hindus and Hinduism were also trying to gain social, political, cultural and religious supremacy over all other communities of the Mughal Empire during the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries mainly due to the unwarranted patronage of Akbar

One of the most important factors of spread of Hindu influence in the court and outside it, was the matrimonial alliances which Akbar had established with the Rajput rulers. It was one of the important reason of Akbar's adorning Islam, according to Syed Nadwi. Then in order to win their confidence and for being closer to them, he raised them to the highest positions of influence. In 1562 A.D., on his way of Ajmer, in order to visit the *Dargah* of Sheikh Moin al-din Chisti, he came into contact with Raja Bihari Mall, the chief of Ambar in Rajputana, and married the latter's daughter at Sambhar.¹ The bride subsequently became

¹ Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nama*, tr., H. Beveridge, Calcutta, 1897, pp. 243-44.

the mother of Saleem (Jehangir). Moreover, Akbar introduced Raja Man Singh, a nephew and the adopted son of Raja Bhagwan Das who was the heir of Raja Bihari Mall, into the imperial service and rose him ultimately to the high office.

The other important step of Akbar in pursuance of his policy of sympathy and kindness for Hindus, which had already resulted in his marriage with the princess of Ambar and the conferment of the office on Raja Man Singh, was the abolition of *Jezya*, the poll tax required to be paid by the non-Muslims in an Islamic state.¹

In 1570AD Akbar again married Hindu princess of Bikaner and Jaisalmer.² Though these Rajput girls were formally converted to Islam, yet their influence in the affairs of the Empire was remarkable and gradually they did not hesitate in siding openly with the forces arrayed against Islam or at least orthodoxy.³ As their conversion was not the result of any change in their outlook but a political and social necessity, their loyalties to their community remained unchanged.⁴ According to Badayuni, they worshipped pigs, which were kept in the palace and in its vicinity, as they believed that God had incarnated Himself in them.⁵ Dr. I. H. Qureshi is rightly of the view that, "Akbar's Hindu consorts must have persuaded their husband to keep pigs to enable them to pay their respect to

¹ *Ibid.*, p.190.

² *Ibid.*, p . 518-519.

³ I.H. Qureshi, '*Ulema in Politics*, Delhi, 1985, p. 49.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 305.

these creatures, because they are believed to be an incarnation of Shiva".¹ Besides, Birbal and Raja Todar Mal also achieved great eminence, the former as a pleasant companion of the Emperor and the later as an able administrator and general.²

Akbar's sympathy for Hindus and their religious outlook had been growing steadily. "His Hindu wives", says Dr. R.P. Tripathi, "by their religious favour, personal devotion and sweet simplicity, must have exercised unconscious influence on the mind of Akbar".³ All such influences prompted him to come near to Hinduism and more importantly kept on seceding from Islam. Akbar also showed interest in the acquisition of the first-hand knowledge of the Hindu thought and principles. He now invited *Pandits* and *Yogis* to expound the doctrine of Hindu religion. Birbal and Man Singh discussed their religious ideas with him and tried to mould him to their own faith.⁴

Impressed and influenced by these people, Akbar removed all restrictions upon the public religious worship by non-Muslims. He also removed restriction on the construction of buildings of public worship. Accordingly, many Hindu temples* were erected at different places of Hindu pilgrimage. Hindu officers and nobles availed the opportunity and built temples dedicated to their gods and goddesses. Man Singh built temples at Banaras and Bindraban and spent several lakhs of rupees on

¹ Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics*, p. 50.

² Khan, *op.cit.*, pp. 118-129.

³ Tripathi, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

⁴ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 257.

their decoration. Another temple was allowed to be repaired and its main idol, destroyed by the imperial army during the Kangra expedition in 1572-73, was restored to its place of honour.¹ Similarly, the Hindus of Thaneser in Punjab were permitted to rebuild the temple in the tank of Kurukshetra by demolishing a mosque at the site.²

Akbar also paid extra-ordinary attention to the development of Hindu culture and civilization. He organized a translation department and many religious books of Hindus were ordered to be translated into Persian.³ Moreover, he participated in Hindu festivals and zealously celebrated *Rakhsha Bandhan*. Hindus used to come to the royal court and tied strings of threads on the Emperor's wrists on the occasion.⁴ He also celebrated *Dewali* and joined the celebration of *Shivaratri*.⁵ Afterwards Akbar got carried away with his attitude towards the Hindu sentiments. The situation came to such a lamenting point that he issued orders by putting a stop to the conversion to Islam from other religions.⁶ He permitted non-Muslims to convert to their old faith-Hinduism.⁷

Akbar and Zoroastrianism

Akbar also seemed to have been under the influence of Zoroastrian religion. He first came into contact with the Zoroastrian

¹ Jehangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Aligarh, 1864, p. 347.

² Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 322, and Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 93.

³ *Ibid.*, (Badayuni), pp. 212-13.

⁴ Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nama*, Vol. I., p. 216.

⁵ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 325.

⁶ Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nama*, p. 41.

⁷ Aziz Ahmad, *Hind Wa Pak Main Islami Culture*, (tr), Delhi, 1991, p. 271

scholars during his stay in Gujrat where Surat, Nausari, Baroch, Cambay etc., were the important centers of Zoroastrians.¹ In 1578AD Akbar invited Dastur Mehrji Rana to his court. He taught Akbar Parsee doctrines, peculiar terms, ordinances, rites and ceremonies of his creed, laying stress above all on the reverence of sun and fire. Akbar's fire worship and worship and respect of heavenly bodies, particularly the sun, was undoubtedly the influence of Zoroastrian ideas.² Akbar is also reported to have prayed before the fire after the style of the Zoroastrians.³ Akbar not only introduced the old Iranian calendar and celebrated *Nauroz* and other Iranian festivals but also showed his inclination towards the Zoroastrian practice of disposing off dead. When his disciple Sultan Khawaja died, he ordered his burial in a grave with an open window facing the sun⁴. Akbar was so much under the influence of Zoroastrianism that the Zoroastrian traditions maintained that 'the Emperor of Hind put on the sacred garb of the Zarthushtis'.⁵

The 'Ulama'-i-Su'

Among the most wicked and astray groups in the Muslim society in those days were the worldly-minded 'ulama, "a section of the society, small in number yet quite influential". "They had opened the door of darkness through the charm of *ijtihad*, the interpretation of the Divine

¹ Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, p. 204.

² *Ibid.*, p. 204.

³ Mehta, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁴ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

⁵ Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, p. 206.

laws, and *Bid'at-i-Hasana*, the pious innovations.”¹ In one of his letters Sirhindi mentions that most of the ‘ulama of that time had given rise to *bid'at* (innovations), and forgotten the way of the Sunnah.²

The love of worldly things and desire of wealth and dignity had so badly demolished and dispirited these ‘ulama that they could easily be agreed to issue any type of verdict (*Fatwa*), to please Emperor Akbar, whose court was the main centre of their substantial activities. When Qazi Khan Badakhshani sought and proved the validity of the prostration before Emperor Akbar, Mulla Alam Kabuli regretted that he had missed the chance, to have issued the same verdict.³ Such activities and wrong interpretations of these worldly minded ‘ulama had killed the spirit of Islam. Sirhindi wrote, ‘as you know better that in previous regime all types of darkness and disturbances were only because of the avarice of the *‘ulama-i Su*.”⁴

In the beginning, two sections of ‘ulama mainly existed in Akbar’s court. One was led by Makhdum al-Mulk (Abdullah Sultanpuri) and the other was headed by Sadr-us Sadur Sheikh Abdur Nabi. Though they exerted good influence upon and were highly regarded and trusted by Akbar, but in later years they put behind all Islamic norms only for their worldly gains. Badayuni relates, that, “one night the ‘ulama got excited and great commotion took place. His majesty did not like this and he told

¹ Nizami, *Hayat-i-Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dahlawi*, p. 272.

² Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 54.

³ Nizami, *Hayat-i-Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dahlawi*, p. 273

⁴ Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Letter No.194.

me to bring to his notice hereafter anyone of the group who uttered unreasonable words, so that he might remove him from the meeting. I said slowly to Asaf Khan, on that account most of them might be turned out. His majesty asked me to relate what I said and he (Asaf Khan) reported what I had told him. His majesty was so much pleased that he passed on these words to his favourites. Makhdum al-Mulk was called into the assembly for being ridiculous. His Majesty put against him in discussion Haji Ibrahim and Sheikh Abul Fazl. They interrupted him (Makhdum al-Mulk) in every word. In the midst of this, some of the favourites also, according to instructions, began to enter into pros and cons and related strange stories about Makhdum. Of these one Khani-i Jahan said that Makhdum al-Mulk had given a Fatwa that Hajj pilgrimage in these times is not compulsory but is hurtful. When he was asked the reason, he argued that the road to Mekka is through Iraq and Gujrat. On the land route there is trouble by the Qazil Bash tribe and on the sea route a passport from the Portuguese is to be obtained and in that passport pictures of Mary and Jesus are imprinted, and this is like idol worship. Thus it is prohibited both ways. The other tale (of Makhdum al-Muluk) was about the pretext of avoiding the *Zakat* of his property, by giving away his treasure to his wife at the end of each year. Similarly his manners and wickedness, deceit and worldliness towards the *mashayikh* and saints of the country, were all related one by one. They related stories, which cast all varieties of shame and rebuke on him, and it was ultimately decided that he should be sent to Mekka. When they asked him whether pilgrimage was compulsory on him,

he replied in negative”.¹ Likewise, Sheikh Abdul Nabi another important divine of Akbar’s court and Sadr-us-Sadur of the empire, also was known for his misbehavior, bad manners and short temper. He too is reported to have discovered pretence for avoiding payment of *Zakat*. According to Badayuni both Makhdum al-Mulk and Sadr-us Sadur, participated in religious discussions in the *Ibadat Khana*, behaved shamefully towards each other.² Instead of developing better understanding and appreciation they led to bickerings and personal recriminations. They quarreled among themselves on theological questions and openly exhibited intolerance to each other’s views. They did not confine themselves to oral differences, but also used their pens against each other. Makhdum al-Mulk wrote a treatise against Abdun Nabi by arguing that no congregational *Namaz* could be led by or offered behind him as he (Abdun Nabi) was a patient of piles and his father had disinherited him.³ Sadr-us Sadr is also said to have compiled a brochure by refuting Makhdum al-Mulk and declaring him to be an illiterate.⁴ In nutshell, their uncompromising attitude on controversial points of shari’ah, their quarrel in the *Ibadat Khana*, which passed from tongue to blows and abuses, made Emperor Akbar disgusted with Islam itself.⁵

¹ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-4.

² *Ibid.*, p. 255

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Muhammad Yasin, *A Social History of Islamic India, 1605-1748*, Lucknow, 1958, p. 141.

Besides, there were other ‘ulama also in Akbar’s court who actively participated in the proceedings of the House of Worship. They too cursed their opponents and imputed allegations to one another. Haji Ibrahim Sirhindi issued a *fatwa* by legalizing the use of the yellow and the red dresses for men. He is also said to have discovered a fabricated *hadith*, which permitted to shave beard. According to that hadith, “Once the Holy Prophet of Islam received one of his Companion’s son who had shaved his beard. The ‘Messenger of God’, looking at the young man, told that the inhabitants of the Paradise would also be clean shaved, like him”.¹ Another Muslim divine found out another anecdote that one should not have beard, like that of the *Qazis* of Iraq.² Similarly a third ‘alim came forward denouncing the legality of beard.³ Likewise, various other topics of Islamic theology and jurisprudence were wrongly explained to Emperor Akbar by these scholars.⁴ One pronounced a thing lawful, another would declare it unlawful.⁵ Syed Muhammad Mir ‘Adl, also a divine of Akbar’s court, called his opponent, even in the Imperial presence, a wretch, abused him and lifted his stick to strike him.⁶

Akbar and Sheikh Mubarak’s Sons-Faizi and Abul Fazl

We cannot fully understand the scenario of Akbar’s court without studying the role of Sheikh Mubarak and his sons Faizi and Abul

¹ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

² *Ibid.*, p.304.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 209, 259.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Fazl. Of all the important groups active in the Akbar's court, 'the most dangerous was that of Sheikh Mubarak and his two sons'.¹ They were cast in the same mould. They joined hands in humiliating the orthodox 'ulama and other religious minded Muslims in the Mughal court and played an important role in bringing about a change in Akbar's beliefs. Sheikh Mubarak was a learned man, and his learning was matched only by his antagonism to the orthodox 'ulama in power, especially 'Abdullah Sultanpuri, the *Makhdum al-Mulk* and Sheikh 'Abdun Nabi, the *Sadr-us Sadur*. He has been a Mahdawi in previous years² but after their suppression, gave up all pretensions of sympathy with them and called himself a Naqashbandi to please some powerful Central Asian nobles. When sh'ia nobles seemed to be gaining ground, he advocated the Sh'ia point of view.³

On his appearance to Mughal court, especially at the *'Ibadat Khana* Sheikh Mubarak suggested a thesis that seemed to fit Akbar's purpose admirably. He tried to twist well-known principles of Islamic jurisprudence and constitutional practice to serve Akbar's designs. In 1573AD when Akbar returned to Sikri from his Gujrat campaign, Sheikh Mubarak advised him to give a lead to his people in religious matters.⁴ I. H. Qureshi rightly points out that Sheikh Mubarak's activities, which were hostile to Islam and Muslims, were based on personal vendetta. He

¹ Qureshi, *'Ulama in Politics*, p. 45.

² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 73-74.

⁴ Tripathi, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

prostituted his learning for damaging the cause of Islam.¹ It appears that he did everything in this connection willfully and purposely. “It would be an insult to his intelligence to think even for a moment that he would not know what he was doing”.² Sheikh Mubarak’s elder son Abul Faiz Faizi, also a learned scholar, (but not so profound as his younger brother Abul Fazl) good poet and capable of writing an exegesis of the Qur‘an without using a single letter with dot or dots, would praise Emperor Akbar for venerating the Sun.³

Sheikh Mubarak’s younger son Abul Fazl, was also a very learned scholar. According to Shah Nawaz Khan, he was equally capable of presenting an exegesis of the verses of Qur‘an to Akbar when he thought that such a gift would gratify the monarch,⁴ and impress upon his mind that the Qur‘an had been written by the Prophet himself and was not inspired.⁵ Having been introduced to Mughal court in 1574AD, Abul Fazl exerted so great influence on Akbar that he considered him the ablest and the most confident among all his nobles and courtiers. “A man so learned”, writes Qureshi, “and unscrupulous, was extremely dangerous when he had an untutored mind like Akbar’s to work upon”.⁶ Even in his lifetime some called him (Abul Fazl) an infidel while others said that he

¹ Qureshi, ‘*Ulama in Politics*, p. 45.

² *Ibid.*,

³ Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 588-89.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 609.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 617.

⁶ Qureshi, ‘*Ulama in Politics*, p. 46.

was an arch heretic.¹ Abul Fazl criticized Islam and refuted the ‘ulama’s argumentations during the debates in the House of Worship. He was not satisfied with merely condemning the ‘ulama in the court but even went to the extent of using bad language against eminent Muslim divines of the past centuries. He attacked Imam Ghazali by declaring his works and sayings as non-sense.² He also refuted the principles of four school of jurisprudence and unhesitatingly denounced the founders of these schools.³ It was Abul Fazl who made an impression upon Akbar that Islam was nothing but imitation (*taqlid*)⁴ and that it has completed its age, one thousand years after the Holy Prophet.⁵ He also brought home the idea of new faith to the Emperor and excited him to be an incarnation of God. Abul Fazl made Akbar to believe that he was the Supreme spiritual power and all Divine characteristics are reflected in him.⁶ Accordingly by propounding the concept of millennium, the favourable circumstances were created to declare Akbar a God’s Prophet.⁷

Akbar and the Sh‘ias

Akbar’s close family contacts with the Iranians and their association with the sh‘ias had unconsciously or consciously moulded the

¹ Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 609.

² Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, *Zubdat al-Muqamat*, Kanpur, 1890, p. 131.

³ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁷ *Ibid.*

thought of Akbar. His childhood had passed in the midst of the folklore and traditions of Persia. Moreover, on his arrival in India along with Humayun and Bairam Khan, Akbar continued to be under the sh'ia suzerainty of the Persian monarch.¹ After becoming emperor in 1556AD, he remained for some years under the virtual tutelage of Bairam Khan whose attachment to the sh'ia sultan of Persia was very pronounced. During his (Bairam's regency), the whole religious administration of the Mughal Empire ran on sh'ia lines and even the *sadr-us-sadur* (Sheikh Gadai), was a sh'ia 'alim.²

During the process of discussions in the '*Ibadat Khana*, when Akbar could not be satisfied on different problems of Islamic theology and jurisprudence, he invited sh'ia 'ulama and scholars to participate in the religious discussions and to know their views on different matters. Initially three sh'ia scholars namely Hakeem 'Abdul Fath, Hakeem Humayun and Hakeem Nuruddin were warmly received. These 'ulama not only attracted the attention of Akbar by their theological learning but Akbar also developed high admiration for them as men of learning. According to Badayuni, Abul Fath soon obtained so great influence upon the Emperor that he was admitted as his intimate companion. Ultimately he got the dignity of a commander of a thousand and had power of a *Vakil*. Badayuni says that Abul Fath was one of those principle influences that led Akbar away from the path of Islam. Hakeem

¹ M.L. Roychoudhary, *The Din-i-Ilahi*, (The Religion of Akbar), third edition, Delhi, 1985, p. 79.

² Badayuni, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

Humayun was so great a friend of Emperor that he often said that he did not relish his meals if Hakeem Humayun was absent.¹

Mulla Muhammad Yezdi another great sh'ia 'alim of Iran, also deserves to be mentioned among the sh'ia 'ulama of Akbar's court. He frequently visited the Emperor and poisoned his ears against the sunni Muslims. He is also reported to have openly criticized sunni jurists and even accursed the Companions of the Holy Prophet of Islam, especially the first three Caliphs and the Prophet's wife 'Aisha (RA).² Listening to his speech and private talks, Akbar started to deny the revelation (*wahy*), Prophethood, and the prophetic miracles (*Mo'jezat*) etc. Impressed by Mulla Yezd's views Akbar used to say that the shari'ah was just an imitation (*taqlid*). He would consider the reasoning (*'aqliyat*) as the basis of the Religion.³

There was another sh'ia 'alim, Qazi Nurullah Shustari, who played an important part in strengthening the sh'ia creed in India. He wrote very famous book, *Majlis al-Mu'mineen*⁴ in defence of sh'ia doctrines. He was appointed *Qazi al-Quzat* of Lahore on the recommendations of Hakeem Abdul Fath. It is noteworthy that Qazi Nurullah, who was a staunch sh'ia, on his appointment was allowed to decide the cases according to the four schools of sunni jurisprudence⁵.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

² *Ibid.*, p. 259.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

⁴ Published from Tehran in 1299. A.H.

⁵ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

Thus we are informed of many sh'ia 'ulama in Akbar's court. They advocated and supported sh'ia customs and practices, e.g., *muta* (the custom of temporary marriage) and *taqiyyah* (the pious fraud) etc., in the 'Ibadat Khana.¹ These 'ulama did not pause here but even obtained royal permission to make conversions to their sect.² There must have been an attempt to change the sunni ideology of Akbar.

The Plight of Tasawwuf

At the advent of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, another important group was that of sufis. Tasawwuf at that time had taken a different shape under the influence of ignorant and misguided sufis, resulting in the degeneration of the Muslim masses. The Muslim mystical thought of the period rotated mainly round the pantheistic ideas of Ibn al-'Arabi.³ Excessive belief in *karamat* or miracles of saints was commonly cherished. Many un-Islamic means of the development of occult powers had been introduced into tasawwuf itself. The mystics had gone to the extent of denying the commandments of the shari'ah as universally binding, and regarded the shari'ah itself as something external and superficial.⁴ Most sufis held musical sessions (*sama'*), indulged in *raqs* (spiritual dances) and celebrated the birth of the Prophet.⁵ They were indifferent to the Sunnah. They extolled *sukr* (ecstasy) above *sahw* (sane

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

² *Ibid.*, p. 317.

³ Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, p. 93.

⁴ Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁵ Muhammad 'Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah*, London, 1986, p. 21.

rationality).¹ They cared more for *dhikr* and *fikr* (contemplation) than *fard* and Sunnah, indulged in spiritual exercises such as *arba'inat* (a special course of forty days of super-erogatory acts), and neglected prayers in assembly (*ba jama'at*) even the weekly prayers on Friday.² Some of them disparaged *salat* because it differentiated between God and the servant;³ others equated resurrection with the sufi experience of *fana*, and denied judgement and punishment.⁴ Some loved to gaze at beautiful faces and hear sweet voices, because they were the manifestation of the Eternal Beauty.⁵

Akbar and the Decree of Infallibility (*Mahdar*)

Most important development that took place during the reign of Akbar and had far-reaching impact on the religious policy of Akbar was 'the decree of infallibility (*Mahdar*). In 987/1579 some scholars of the royal court prepared a testimony (*mahdar*)⁶, got it signed by others⁷ and presented it to Akbar. They testified that Akbar was, 'the most just, most knowledgeable and most God-fearing', as such he ranked above the *mujtahids* and that he had the authority to rule in matters in which they

¹ Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

² Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. I., Letter No. 260.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 261

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 58.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 66

⁶ For details of *Mahdar* see Badayuni, *op. cit.*, p. 271f

⁷ The document was carefully drafted by Sheikh Mabark and signed by Maulana 'Abdullah Sultanpuri, Sheikh 'Abdun Nabi, Gazi Khan Badakshani, Hakim-ul Mulk, Sheikh Mubarak, Qazi Jalel al-Din Multani, and Sadr Jahan Mufti. (Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nama*, p. 395).

differed. Armed with this testimony, “Akbar within the next two decades did three things which had far-reaching consequences for Islam and Muslims in the sub-continent”.¹

First, he launched a new Divine religion (*Din-i-Ilahi*), drafted by Mulla Mubarak and his son Abul Fazl. He and his loyal scholars entertained the idea that since Islam had completed a thousand years of its life (the natural life span of a religion) it ought to be replaced by a new religion.² This new religion was so formulated that it incorporated creeds, rites and practices from every religion-Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity-except Islam.³ The new religion did not attract the attention of the general masses. It is said that only eighteen disciples scummed to it, and later on the Emperor himself ceased to be serious about it.⁴ As a religion, therefore, it proved to be a failure.

The second important consequence of *Mahdar* was that Akbar gathered in his court persons who criticized, flouted and ridiculed Islamic beliefs, practices and personalities. At the outset Akbar tried to seek truth in different religions but due to narrow-minded and selfish ‘ulama, the quest turned into a campaign against Islam. Although the faith in God-hood was retained, but, creation of the world, existence of the

¹ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

² The first command that was issued was this: that the “Era of the Thousand” should be stamped on the coins, and that the *Tarikh-i-Alfi*, a new history marking the line of demarcation in the human civilization should be written. (Badayuni, *op. cit.*, p. 311)

³ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁴ Aziz Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

angels, resurrection of the body, revelation and prophecy, were rejected.¹ Instead, eternity of the world and transmigration of the soul were upheld.² The life of the Prophet was criticized, his name was expunged from individual names;³ *salat* and other rites were flayed; and injunctions concerning lawful (*halal*) and unlawful (*haram*) were ridiculed⁴ and more importantly, those who refused to comply and dared to object were humiliated, imprisoned and sometimes exterminated.⁵ Mulla Muhammad Yezdi, the sh'ia Qadi of Jawnpur and Mu'izz al-Mulk, the Chief Qadi of Bengal were executed for opposing Akbar's religious policy.⁶

The laws and institutions of the country based on the shari'ah were changed by Akbar. This was third and most important aftermath of declaration of *Mahdar*. Akbar abolished zakat and jizyah,⁷ and withdrew the prohibition of drinking and gambling.⁸ He also banned the marriages between cousins as allowed in the shari'ah and proscribed more than one marriage.⁹ Strange enough, the censure on prostitution was removed. Cow slaughter was banned.¹⁰ The name of the Prophet and his

¹ Shaykh Muhammad Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, New York & London, 1964, pp. 162-3.

² Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³ Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 324.

⁴ Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 162.

⁵ Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Letter Nos. 47, 81.

⁶ Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 160.

⁷ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-24.

⁸ Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I. p. 522.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 268; Nadwi, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, (Nadwi), p. 107.

Companions was dropped from Friday sermons and Hijra calendar gave way to *Ilahi* calendar.¹ Study of Arabic and Islamic sciences was discouraged² and government aid to the Arabic schools was either reduced or completely stopped.³

“The effect of these measures”, writes M. ‘Abdul Haq Ansari, “was that Islam ceased even to be a religion among other religions: it was constricted and castigated”.⁴ There was also revival of Hinduism in northern India which made the conditions worse. At several places the lives of Muslims were threatened, mosques were demolished and the observance of Islamic rites obstructed. Sirhindi relates the situation in the following words: ‘in the earlier generation non-Muslims freely performed their religious rites in Muslim towns, but Muslims could not practise Islam and if they dared they were put to death’.⁵ ‘The non-Muslims of India are not afraid to demolish mosques and erect temples in their place. For instance in Kurukshetra there was a mosque and the tomb of a saint. They have been demolished and in these places a very big temple has been erected’.⁶

This was a general view of the religious ideologies that were at work in India at the time of Sirhindi’s emergence. Before working out

¹ Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, p. 30.

² Badayuni, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

³ Aziz Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

⁴ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁵ Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Letter Nos. 47 and 81.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 92.

the precise impact and influence of these obtaining conditions on Sirhindi's thought it seems quite relevant to make a brief study of the political, religious and intellectual conditions prevalent in the then Muslim world.

Political Conditions of the then Muslim World

Middle East, the Central part of Islamic world, was under the rule of Ottoman Sultans in the sixteenth century of the Christian era. Sultan Salim I (918/1512-926/1520), the founder of the Ottoman Caliphate, wrested Egypt from Mamluks in 1517 AD and made a declaration, in the same year, about his assumption of Caliphate and the trusteeship of the two sacred cities.¹ Thereafter, the Arabian peninsula and all the Muslim and Arab countries of North Africa, with exception of Morocco, came under the sway of Saleem I, and his son Sulaiman 'Azam al-Qanuni (926/1520-974/1566), known to the West as Sulaiman, the Magnificent.² He was then sovereign of the largest empire in the world. The Mujaddid was born three years before the death of Sultan 'Azam, 'whose reign marked the pinnacle of Ottoman Empire'.³

The Safawids rose to power in Iran and Khurasan in the beginning of this century. Isma'il Safawi (905/1500-930/1524) was the founder of Safawid dynasty.⁴ Safawids were rivals of the Ottoman Turks

¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 13, p. 778.

² *Ibid.*, p. 779.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 781.

⁴ Tharwat Saulat, *Millat-i-Islamiya Ke Mukhtisar Tarikh*, Vol. II, Delhi, 1992, p. 247.

and had, contrary to the Ottomans, declared Shi‘asm as the state religion of Persia.¹ Shah ‘Abbas I (995/1587-1037/1627), commonly known as ‘Abbas the Great, was the most successful sovereign of the Safawids. The Safawid dynasty declined after ‘Abbas I.² The Safawids ruled over the area existing from Baghdad to Hirat.

Turkistan or Transoxiana—as known by the name in the medieval literature, was another important region of the then Islamic world. It was ruled by Shaibani dynasty of Uzbegs (1488/893- 1784/1199) who assumed the power over the area in the beginning of the sixteenth century and retained the control up to the middle of the eighteenth century of Christian era.³ It is in this part of the Muslim world i.e., Transoxiana that the Naqashbandiya silsila of sufism originated and Sirhindi belonged to the same sufi silsilah.⁴

In the beginning of the tenth century Hijrah, Afghanistan—the immediate neighbour of India to its West, was not politically stable, untill Babar occupied Qandhar in 928/1522. Babar shifted its headquarters to India after the conquest of the country from where he ruled over Kabul, Badakhshan and Qandhar. Thereafter, Afghanistan saw a peaceful period of its history up to 1151/1738, when Nadir Shah brought the Mughal rule to an end.

¹ Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London, 1993, p. 703.

² Sharif, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p.1421.

³ Saulat, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

India was ruled by Lodis at the commencement of the sixteenth century of Christian era. The most successful ruler of the Lodi dynasty was Sikander Lodi (923/1517).¹ He was pious and was a great patron of learning. The most pious, learned, benevolent and adept in administration was Sher Shah Suri who ruled from 946/1540 to 952/1545.² The Lodi rule was brought to an end in 932/1526, when Ibrahim Lodi, last ruler of the dynasty, was killed in a battle against Babar.³ Babar consequently laid the foundation of Mughal rule in India.

The Mughal India did not achieved political stability until Akbar ascended the throne in 963/1556 and ruled the country for half a century. After Akbar, Jehangir took the reign of the country in his hands. At that time Sirhindi was 43 years old and died while Jehangir was still holding the reins of the Mughals.

Religious Conditions

At the religious front, in the sixteenth century Muslim world, Islam was still a motivating force. The then Muslims had firm faith in religious beliefs and truths though there were occasional lapses. Due to the utmost respect and loyalty on part of the common masses to Islam, the then rulers were compelled to proclaim and uphold the Islamic traditions. Sultan Salim I of Ottomans only achieved stability when he assumed the

¹ Stanley Lane-Poole, *Medieval India, Under Muhammedan Rule*, Delhi, 1994, p. 190.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 231-32.

³ Sayyid Hashmi Faridabadi, *Tarikh-Musalmanan-i-Pakistan wa Bharat*, Vol. I, Karachi, 1987, p. 329.

titles of Caliph and Servant of the two holy cities of Muslims.¹ Sulaiman, the magnificent was simple and religious loving. He is said to have scribed eight copies of Holy Qur'an with his own hands.²

The Iranians were also deeply religious and had great love and respect for the *Ahl al-Bait* (progeny of the Prophet). Shah 'Abbas, the prominent Safawid king himself swepted the grave of Caliph 'Ali in Najaf. The people of Afghanistan and Turkistan were also religious minded, as were the people of India. This was the age when mysticism was very popular and had led to institutionalization of the system in every part of the Islamic world. It is relevant to mention that there was religious unrest and inconsistency found in India and its neighbouring countries. They have been discussed in detail in the preceeding pages.

Intellectual Conditions

At the intellectual level, the Islamic world of sixteenth century of the Christian era was bankrupt and devoid of any creative thought. No significant addition was made to the thought, science or culture already existing during the period.³ The intellectual pursuits were limited to compilations, reproductions, commentaries and summations of the earlier work. This was the political, religious and intellectual atmosphere prevailing in the world of Islam, particularly in India, 'when a

¹ *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. IA, 1992, p. 321.

² Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

³ However, the period still saw the emergence of some eminent scholars in the different parts of the Muslim world. For details see, Nadwi, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-47.

caller from Sirhind called out, “clear the way, he comes who has to walk the track”. A renovator, a descendant of Great Caliph ‘Umar, appeared on the scene and this was Ahmad of Sirhind’.¹

¹ Syed Sulaiman Nadwi, ‘Introduction’, *Seerat Saiyid Ahmad Shahid*, by Syed Abdul Hassan ‘Ali Nadwi, Vol. I, Lucknow, p. 31.

CHAPTER II

SHEIKH AHMAD SIRHINDI : LIFE AND WORKS

Family Background

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi belonged to a distinguished family with a long scholarly tradition. His family traced its descent from the caliph 'Umar bin al-Khattab¹ and Sirhindi being the twenty-eighth in the lineage.² One of his ancestors, Sheikh Shahabuddin 'Ali, commonly known as Farrukh Shah Kabuli, was among the great nobles and ministers of Salatin of Kabul.³ He is reported to have

¹ Some historians have called Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi as Sayyid Ahmad Sirhindi which is incorrect, because his descent is not traced to Prophet's family. For instance see, Qiyammdin Ahmad, *Wahabi Movement in India*, Calcutta, 1966, pp 12-13.

² The genealogical chain of Sirhindi is as follows:-

Sheikh Ahmad S/O 'Abdul Ahad Faruqi S/O Zain-al-'Abidin S/O 'Abdul Haiy S/O Sheikh Muhammad S/O Habibullah S/O Imam Rafiuddin S/O Nasir al-din S/O Sulaiman S/O Yousuf S/O Ishaq S/O Abdullah S/O Shoiab S/O Ahmad S/O Yousuf S/O Farrkh Shah Kabuli S/O Nasir al-din S/O Mahmud S/O Sulaiman S/O Mas'ud S/O 'Abdullah Wa'iz S/O 'Abdullah al Wa'iz (Akbar) S/O Abul Fateh S/O Ishaq S/O Ibrahim S/O Nasir S/O 'Abdullah S/O Umar b. al-Khattab (Kishmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89; Sheikh Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *Hadhrat al-Quds*, tr., Dr. Gh. Mustafa Khan, Delhi, 1991, pp. 14-15.)

³ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

visited India with the army of Kabul as an important officer.¹ Farruk Shah was known for his zeal and love for Islam. The famous Chisti saint Sheikh Farid al-din Ganj-Shekar² was also his descendant.³

Another great ancestor of Sirhindi was Imam Rafi-ud-din,⁴ a remote descendent of Farrukh Shah Kabuli and a Khalifa of Sayid Jalal al-din Surkh Bukhari generally addressed as Makhdum-i-Jahaniyan.⁵ When the later was on his way to Delhi, Imam Rafiuddin accompanied him and met Sultan Firoz Shah Taghlaq (752-790 AH) in Delhi. After sometime the sultan sent Imam Rafiuddin back to Sirhind and asked him to lay the foundation of a fortress and establish a town there.⁶

¹ *Ibid.*

² He was an eminent saint of the Chisti silsilah in India and the spiritual successor of Bhakhtiyar Kaki. Born in a village near Multan, he devoted his life in propagation of Chisti mystic thought. He left deep impact on the Indian society and a large number of people, Umara, 'Ulama and Sufis flocked to him and joined his mission. He died in 1265 A.D. in Ajodhan (now Pakpattan) in Punjab. For his detailed biography, See, K.A. Nizami, *The Life and Times of Sheikh Farid-uddin Ganj Shakar*, Delhi, 1955, and *Tarikh-i Mashaikh-i Chist*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1979; Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlavi, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-59. Also, Ikram, *Aab-i-Kauthar*, pp. 217-26.

³ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁴ According to Kishmi he was a pious man, devoted to religion and spiritual pursuits.

⁵ He was born on 15th Sha'ban 707/89th Feb. 1308, and was an eminent Chisti as well as a Suhrawardi saint of medieval India. He belonged to Bukhara. He is reported to have had deep impact on Sultan Firoz Shah Taghlaq. For details, see, Ziauddin Barni, *Tarikh Firoz Shahi*, Calcutta, 1891; K.A. Nizami, "The Suhrawardi Silsilah and its Influence on Medieval Indian Politics", *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. III, Jul-Oct, 1957, p. 131.

⁶ According the Hashim Kishmi, when Makhdum-i-Jahaniyan and Imam Rafiuddin were enroute to Delhi, they passed through the village Sirhind and made a sojourn there. The people accorded warm welcome to the saints, and requested them to make recommendation before Sultan Feroz Shah for establishing a town there. The Sultan accepted the recommendation. See Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 90. According to Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, once in the reign of Sultan Feroz Shah, the royal treasury was passing through a forest under the Imperial guard. A saint was traveling along with the treasury. When the carvan reached the spot where Sirhind is now situated, the saint had inspiration that a very great saint will be born at the place. The news reached the king. He therefore ordered the construction of a town there (Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 7)

Sirhindi's father Sheikh Ahad Faruqi,¹ was the fifth descendant of Imam Rafiuddin. He was a renowned sufi and scholar, and impressed his contemporaries both by his spirituality and scholarship. He had established his own seminary at Sirhind, which with the passage of time had become a recognized center of Islamic theology in northern India. A number of students from different parts of India, Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia flocked around him to acquire knowledge and slake their spiritual thirst.² He is reported to have thorough command over all mystic and traditional works like, the *Fusus al-Hikam*³ of Sheikh Mohiuddin Ibn al-'Arabi and *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*⁴ of Sheikh Shahabuddin Suharwardi.⁵ Abdul Ahad had thorough command over the concept of *wahdat al-wajud* and taught it to his students with great zeal, giving scholarly explanations of all subtleties⁶. He was a prolific writer also and

¹ According to Rizvi, he belonged to the Naqashbandi Silsila (*Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India*, p. 202). But according to *Zubdat al-Maqamat*, (p. 116), he did not belong to the order.

² Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

³ It is considered one of the most difficult works of Ibn al-'Arabi. Written in 1230 A.D. in Arabic language, it deals with the teachings of eminent prophets. The book is divided into twenty-seven chapters, each being named after a prophet. A number of commentaries have been written on it, in different languages. For detail see, Nizami, *Tarikhi Maqalat*, pp. 24-31

⁴ It has been used as manual for the study of Islamic mysticism by the sufis of all silsilahs and is considered one of the best works produced by Muslim saints. It was first published at Cairo in 1888.

⁵ Born in 539/1145, he was the nephew, khalifa and the spiritual successor of Sheikh Abdun Najib Suhrawardi. He studied under Sheikh 'Abdul Qadir Jeelani and other eminent 'Ulama and Masha'kh of the time. The Sheikh visited extensively. He died in Baghdad in 1234-35.

⁶ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 113; Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Letter No., 31.

his works like *Kanz al-Haqa'q*¹ and *Asrar-i-Tashahhud*², reveal his profound understanding of the literature on Islamic mysticism and his calibre as a researcher.

Sheikh 'Abdul Ahad had been initiated into various sufi orders.³ Thus he was a Khalifa of Sheikh Ruknuddin, the son and successor of Sheikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi,⁴ in the Chisti silsilah.⁵ He also received the Khilafat in the Qadiriya order by the distinguished Sheikh Kamal Qadri of Kaithal.⁶ As a devout sufi Sheikh 'Abdul Ahad traveled to various cities and called on eminent saints of different silsilahs.⁷

On his sojourn at Sikandara,⁸ he married a pious lady and then left to Sirhind along with his wife.⁹

¹ According to Hashim Kishmi, the treatise deals with tasawwuf and sheds valuable light on various spiritual themes.(p. 117). Sirhindi himself refers to the treatise in one of his brochure *Risalat-i-Tahliliya*, (Published from Karachi, 1965, p. 28).

² It is considered one of the standard works dealing with the ascension (*Me'raj*) of the Holy Prophet of Islam. It gives a scientific discussion on the subject in Arabic language. Kishmi has reproduced its opening and concluding paragraphs. (Kishmi *op. cit.*, p. 118-20).

³ It may be noted that it was a tradition in medieval period to be initiated into various sufi silsilahs at a time.

⁴ He was a renowned saint of the Sabiriya branch of the Chisti silsilah. He was first the resident of Rudauli but in 1491 AD, migrated to Shahabad near Ambala in Punjab, where he lived for 30 years. Finally, in 1526, he settled in Gangohi where he died in 1536-37. He is author of *Maktubat-i-Qudusiyah*., He wrote commentary on *Fusus al-Hikam*. See Nizami, *Tarikh Masheikh Chist*, Vol. I, pp. 272-4.

⁵ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-96.

⁶ He was an eminent saint of the Qadiriya Silsila and played an important role in popularization of order in India. He died in 1573.

⁷ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁸ A town near Etawah in present Uttar Pradesh.

⁹ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

Birth of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi was born on Friday, the 14th *Shawal* 971 AH/26th May 1564 A.D., at Sirhind.¹ His father named him 'Abul Barakat Badruddin Ahmad.² As the father was devoted to Sheikh Kamal Qadri of Kaithal, he took the infant to the saint who was staying in Sirhind at that time, and obtained his blessings and spiritual favours.³

Sirhindi received his early education from his illustrious father, acquiring knowledge of Islamic sciences and memorizing the Holy Qur'an.⁴ He was then sent to Sialkot (present Pakistan), an important seat of learning in those days. Here he learned logic, philosophy and some works of *tafsir* and hadith like *Azdi* and *Imthala*, under the guidance of Maulana Kamal Kashmiri.⁵ Later, he came in contact with another renowned scholar of Kashmir, Sheikh Yaqoob Sarfi,⁶ and acquired

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127. Kishmi gives the chorographic term "KHASHE" which reveals 971 A.H.

² Khawaja Muhammad Ahsan, *Rauzat al-Qaiyyumiyah*, (Urdu), Part I, Lahore, 1335AH, p. 54.

³ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁴ According to Sirhindi himself, he memorized the Holy Qur'an during his imprisonment in the Gawaliar fort. See Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 43. Also Muhammad Mas'ud Ahmad, *Sirat Mujaddid-i-Alfi-Thani*, Karachi, 1976, p. 51.

⁵ He was commonly known as Maulana Kamal Kashmiri. He was a famous 'alim of Kashmir who migrated to Sialkot in 971/1563 where he established a seminary where a number of students studied. Kashmiri had among his students the last great theologian of Islam, 'Abdul Hakim Sialkoti (d. 1067/1656), the writer of a super-commentary on the *Sharh al-Maqasid* of Jurjani, besides other treatises. (Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 140). Kashmiri died in 1010/1601 and was buried in Lahore.

⁶ Sarfi was born in 908/1501-2, in Kashmir. He was one of the renowned scholars and 'ulama of his time and a well-known poet as well. He was the spiritual successor of great Kubrawi saint Sheikh Husain Khawarizmi. He received from Ibn Hajar the authority to give instructions in Hadith. He traveled far and wide. He died on 18th *Zeeq'da* 1003/25th July 1595. He was the author of some sublime and beautiful works and wrote many treatises. He wrote a commentary on the *Sahih al-Bukhari*. He is also said to have written a commentary on the Holy Qur'an. See Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 142-9. Also, A.Q. Rafiqi, *Sufism in Kashmir*, Delhi, 1976, pp. 116-24. Sirhindi also joined the mystic discipline of and received Khilafat from Sarfi in the Kubrawiya and Suhrawardiya orders. (Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 18)

knowledge of *hadith* from him. It is maintained that Sarfi had deeply influenced and laid great impression upon Sirhindi. It was due to his association with Sarfi that Sirhindi always insisted on Prophet's *Sunnah* and raised voice against sh'ite sect and ideology.¹ Sirhindi read some advanced texts of *tafsir* and *hadith* from Qadi Bahlul Badakhshani.² Under the supervision of Qadi Bahlul, he studied *Tafsir-i-Wahidi*³, *Tafsir-i-Baizawi*,⁴ *Sahih al-Bukhari*,⁵ *Mishkat-i-Tabrizi*,⁶ *Shamail-i-Tirmizi*,⁷ *Jame' Sagheer-i-Siyuti*,⁸ *Qasida-i-Burda*⁹ and *Mishkat al-Masabih*.¹⁰ Sirhindi completed his education at the age of seventeen and returned home as an erudite scholar and divine.¹¹ At home he started imparting instruction in his seminary, benefiting students with his scholarly and divine guidance.¹²

¹ Rafiqi, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-2. According to Rafiqi, it might be possible that Sirhindi wrote his *Risala Radd-i-Rawafiz* under Sarfi's deep influence.

² Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

³ Famous *tafsir* of the Qur'an and still taught in the traditional Muslim educational institutions.

⁴ Also a famous *tafsir* of the Qur'an and still taught in the traditional Muslim educational institutions.

⁵ The full name is *al-Jami' al-Sahih al-Musnad al-Mukhtasar min Umir-i-Rasul-Allah*. It contains 7000 traditions collected in about 16 years.

⁶ Also a collection of Ahadith.

⁷ Another famous collection of Hadith by Imam Tirmizi.

⁸ It is one of the most important texts included in the syllabus of Islamic theology.

⁹ A famous poem composed by al-Busiri. No other Arabic poem has attained such fame. About ninety commentaries of it have been written in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Berber.

¹⁰ Also a famous collection of Hadith, compiled by Abn Muhammad al-Husain bin Mas'ud bin Muhammad al-Baghawi (ob. 510/1116), a renowned sha'fite scholar. It contains 4436 Hadith and was first published in 733/1336. Its first English translation by A. N. Mathew appeared in 1810 from Calcutta.

¹¹ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹² *Ibid*; Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

Later in 990/1582, Sirhindi went to Agra (Capital of the Mughals) and stayed there for a long time.¹ At Agra he had first hand information about the deteriorating religious conditions within and without the Mughal court. He also established contacts with the eminent nobles of the time,² such as poet Laureate Faydi (951/1547-1004/1595) and his younger brother, Abul Fadl (958/1551-1011/1602), a distinguished writer and an informal secretary of the Emperor Akbar.

Both the brothers Faydi and Abul Fadl had great regard for Sirhindi. Sirhindi frequently visited them. It is said that once at Faydi's residence, he found him involved in certain intricacies, while writing Qur'anic exegesis, *Sawati al-Ilham*,³ being written in dot less words. Sirhindi helped him out and wrote a few pages of it.⁴

At another time Sirhindi while discussing the importance of philosophy especially the Greek philosophers, their metaphysical thought and rational approach, Abul Fadl defended the philosophers and their philosophy. Quoting Imam Ghazali, Sirhindi criticized their (philosophers) thought. Enraged, Abul Fadl abused the great philosopher-scholar.

¹ Exact period of stay at Agra, although not known, but historical events show that it was from 990/1583 to 998/1591 (eight years).

² According to Youhanan Friedman, Sirhindi had been invited to the Mughal court. (Youhanan Friedmann, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi*, London, 1971, p. XIII). But the author of *Rauzat al-Qaiyyamiya*, does not agree to the view (p. 62).

³ A commentary on the Holy Qur'an with the distinction of being free from letters containing diacritics. It has been characterized by critics to be almost a "useless piece of Arabic writing". It is reported that on its completion (in 1002/1593) many contemporary 'Ulama raised their voice and submitted petition against its author. See Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 300. Also *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. II, p. 871.

⁴ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

Annoyed and shocked by this comment, Sirhindi left and did not meet him for few days.¹ In another encounter with Sirhindi, Abul Fadl denied the necessity of prophecy,² repudiated the shari'ah, condemned worship as hypocrisy, regarded every religion as equally bad, and pinned faith in reason.³ The former contested his ideas and argued the case for prophecy. To counter this trend Sirhindi wrote his first book, *Ithbat-i-Nubuwwah*, (Defence of Prophecy).⁴ At Agra, Sirhindi left deep impression of his personality.

During his sojourn at Agra in 998/1591, his father asked him to leave the place, having stayed there for a long period of time, and return to Sirhind.⁵ Consequently Sirhindi left Agra for Sirhind. On their way back they met Sheikh Sultan Thanesari.⁶

In Sirhind, Sirhindi started his family life. He imparted education to the students in his ancestral seminary and spent most of the time in offering prayer and meditation. Very often he consulted his father ('Abdul Ahad), in various matters of Islamic theology and mysticism. The

¹ Sheikh Muhammad Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, Delhi, n. d., p. 228.

² Such ideas were held by many others in royal court. (Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 18).

³ For religious and political ideas of Abul Fadl, see Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of Muslims in Akbar's Reign*, pp. 339-373 and *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. I, p. 117.

⁴ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁵ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁶ He was well versed with those branches of learning, which depend on memory. He acquired the honour of performing pilgrimage to Mekka and Medina. For a long time he was in the Imperial service. He worked for four years alone and without any co-adjustor, in the project of the translation of *Mahabarta*, which is known as *Ramz Nama*. He was appointed Karori of Thanesar and Karnal by Akbar. (Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 118-19).

father himself imparted Sirhindi, the intricacies of spiritual process of different sufi Silsilahs. Sirhindi studied *Fusus al-Hikam*, *Futuhat-i-Makkiya* and *Awarif al-Ma'arif*, under his father's guidance.¹ Meanwhile Sheikh 'Abdul Ahad initiated his son into his own mystic discipline and conferred the *Khilafat* in the Chistiya, Suharwardiya and the Qadiriya silsilah upon him by declaring him his spiritual successor.² Sheikh 'Abdul Ahad Faruqi passed away on Wed. the 17th *Jamad I* 1007/ 6th Dec 1598, at the age of eighty years. Sirhindi was then unanimously accepted as the spiritual head of his father's disciples and followers.³

The Discipleship of Baqi-Billah and Initiation into the Naqashbandiya Silsila

After the death of his father Sheikh 'Abdul Ahad, Sirhindi decided to fulfill his old desire to perform Hajj. On his way to Mekka and Medina (in Oct. 1599), he met Maulana Hasan Kashmiri⁴ at Delhi, who was one of his fast friends, and class-fellow during his studies at Sialkot. Kashmiri spoke to him about Khawaja Baqi-Billah who had recently settled down in Delhi and had become very popular in the cross-section of Delhites. Developing keen desire to meet Baqi-Billah,⁵ Hasan Kashmiri

¹ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

² Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Mabda'-wa-Ma'ad*, Karachi, 1984, pp. 9-10.

³ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, pp.9-10; Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁴ He originally belonged to Kashmir but permanently resided at Delhi where he himself had joined the mystic discipline of Khawaja Baqi-Billah.

⁵ Khawaja Muhammad Baqi-Billah (actual name Syed Raziuddin) was born in Kabul on 5th *Zil Hija* 971/16th Dec. 1563.(Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 5). His father Qazi Abdus Salam, genealogically a Quraishi Syed, was famous for piety and scholarship.(*Ibid.*) After having completed formal education, he spent considerable time in mystic travels. He visited Hindustan, Lahore, Afghanistan and met eminent saints, benefiting from their spiritual experiences. He also visited Kashmir and remained there for about two years
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took him to the saint,¹ who put deep impression upon the thought of Sirhindi, and was "the source of all the latter Muslim revivalist movements in Indian sub-continent".²

Sirhindi was received warmly by Khawaja Baqi Billah when the former called upon him, with Maulana Hasan Kashmiri. Ordinarily Baqi Billah never showed any interest in enrolling novices for spiritual training, but deviating from his usual practice, he persuaded Sirhindi to spend sometime with him.³ Accordingly, Sirhindi undertook spiritual practices and meditation under Baqi Billah's mystic guidance, and within a short period of time Sirhindi was enlightened enough by the saint and he turned a devout mystic. He was so impressed by Baqi Billah that he expressed the desire to be enrolled (*bi'at*) as a disciple for undergoing

.....Contd. from page 68.

in the company of Sheikh Baba Wali(Wali was a Naqashbandi saint and belonged to Khawarism. He came to Kashmir in 999/1590-1 and stayed at the khanqah of Syed Ali Hamadani). He finally settled down in Delhi in 1008/1599, and devoted himself to the popularity of the Naqashbandiya silsilah. He died in 1012/1603.(Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 18). Baqi Billah did not participated in the Mughal politics but maintained cordial relation with the ruling class.

Baqi Billah laid great emphasis on the adherence to *Kitab-wa-Sunnah* and considered Tasawwuf a complete devotion and surrender to it. He maintained that no one could become a perfect saint without following the shari'ah. He advised his disciples to earn livelihood through legal means and personal efforts.(*Kulliyat-i Baqi Billah*, pp. 20-22). He strongly favoured *tawakkul* (trust in God) and considered it one of the significant features of Islamic mysticism. He also laid emphasis on *rabita* or *tasawwur-i-sheikh* and enjoyed to practice it regularly.(Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 17). It appears that Baqi Billah believed in *wahdat al-wujud*, within the framework of the shari'ah. But it is said that during the last days of his life he changed his views.(Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 43).

¹ Sayyid Muhammad Miyan, '*Ulama-i-Hind Ka Shandar Madi*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1963, p. 7.

² Nizami, *Hayat-i-Sheikh 'Abdul Haq Muhaddith-Dehlawi*, p. 134.

³ It is reported that Baqi Billah had been spiritually informed of Sirhindi's visit to him. (Kishmi *op. cit.*, p. 141)

spiritual training in the Naqashbandiya discipline.¹ Baqi Billah initiated Sirhindi into the Naqashbandiya silsilah as his *murid* and in the month of *Rajab*, 1008/Jan. 1600, he conferred his *Khilafat* upon him.² During his first stay with Baqi-Billah, Sirhindi “acquired perfection in outward and inward knowledge and was rewarded with a speedy ascent from one stage to another in the realm of spirit difficult to be expressed in words”.³ Having benefited from his stay with the saint, Sirhindi returned to Sirhind, fully imbibed with the Naqashbandiyah doctrines.

Both Khawaja Baqi Billah and Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi considered their (first) meeting with each other, a great event in their spiritual career. Baqi Billah expressed his sentiments, in a letter to a friend, and wrote, “a man from Sirhind named Sheikh Ahmad has recently come. He is very learned and has great spiritual power. He has lived with me for some days; on the basis of what I have seen of him in this period, I hope that he will be in future a lamp which will illuminate the world.”⁴ Similarly, Sirhindi also wrote in a letter to Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi that, “when I felt spiritual thirst, I fortunately reached the Khanqah of Baqi Billah who taught me the lesson of Divine Names”.⁵ Moreover, in another letter to Maulana Hasan Kashmiri, Sirhindi thanks the latter with great humility and says that it was he, (Hasan Kashmiri)

¹ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

² Sirhindi, *Mabda-wa-Ma'ad*, pp. 141-46.

³ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁴ *Kulliyat-i-Khawaja Baqi Billah*, *op. cit.*, p. 130. Also Kishmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-45.

⁵ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 290.

through whose guidance he reached the threshold of Baqi Billah and attained higher and higher spiritual stages.¹

At home Sirhindi, pursued *Sayr* and *Sulk*, as his spiritual mentor had suggested. He dispatched many letters to Baqi Billah, describing his spiritual progress therein. It is learnt that the famous letter in which he threw light on the various stages of his spiritual development and which later on became the main point of the controversy between him and the other 'ulama, sufis and even Emperor Jehangir, was also written during these days.²

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi visited Baqi Billah again in *Ramadhan* 1009/February 1601, and stayed with him for three months. Now Baqi Billah held him in high esteem and paid him great honour. It is said that once in a reply to Sirhindi, Baqi Billah replied, "It is me your servant Muhammad Baqi".³ During his whole stay with his spiritual mentor, Sirhindi continued meditation and benefited from his radiance as

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No.279.

² In the beginning of the letter, Sirhindi throws light on the initial stages of his mystical journey. Then he describes its second phase and says, "Now I reached some higher stages, the stage of 'Uthman Zenurain, the third pious caliph. Other caliphs are also authorized to live in this stage. It too is the stage of perfection and direction (*maqam-i-takmil-o-irshad*). Later on I saw another station, higher to the previous one. I was told that it was place of the second pious caliph, 'Umar al-Faruq and then there is the station of Abu Bakr, the first pious caliph. I visited that very place also. At this stage I found myself accompanied by Khawaja Muhammad Bahuddin Naqashband. And above all there is the stage of Holy Prophet(s). Below this stage and above the stage of Abu Bakr, there was a bright and luminous stage, which I had not seen. I came to know that it was *Maqam-i-Mahbubiyat*, the stage of divine love and I experienced this stage also. Thence I found myself like air and clouds. Khawaja Bahauddin Naqashband resides in the stage of Siddiq Akbar. (Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No.11).

³ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-154.

well as his discourses. Now, when he intended to return, Baqi Billah asked him to teach the *tariqah*, and placed some disciples in his charge. Sirhindi was hesitant to take up the responsibility, but Baqi Billah testified his suitability for the task. Sirhindi bowed to his judgement and started the work.¹

In the same year, most probably the first half of 1010/1601, Sirhindi was conferred upon with the Khilafat in the *Qadiriya* silsilah by Shah Sikandar Qadiri, the grandson and spiritual successor of Shah Kamal Qadiri.² Sirhindi, once sitting in the mosque, was presented by Sikandar Qadri, the spiritual religious garment (*Khirqah*). Many supernatural events are said to have occurred, when Sirhindi wore this garment.³ It may be mentioned here that, though in the beginning Sirhindi initiated disciples in all the mystic orders but subsequently he confined the practice to the Naqashbandiya order.

Sirhindi visited his spiritual preceptor third time in the beginning of 1012/1603, when the latter was seriously ill. Baqi Billah, however, accorded a warm welcome to his favourite disciple, by walking some distance to welcome him.⁴ He is also reported to have sought his blessings and favours for himself, his infant sons and both the wives.⁵ Baqi Billah then appointed Sirhindi as his chief *khalifa* and spiritual

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

² *Ibid.*, p. 134.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 135

⁴ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁵ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

successor, and enjoined rest of his disciples to strictly follow and associate himself with Sirhindi.

Later on, when Sirhindi left for home Baqi entrusted his sons to him for spiritual guidance.¹ At Sirhind, he spent some days with his family and then proceeded to Lahore. There he met a number of ‘ulama, sufis and scholars of the time. Maulana Tahir a famous ‘alim of the town joined the spiritual circle of Sirhindi. Khawaja Farrukh Hussain of Transoxiana and Mir Syed Nasir Ahmad of Rum also did the same. A large number of local inhabitants are reported to have been benefited from and enlisted in the mystic discipline of Sirhindi.

Khawaja Muhammad Baqi Billah died in Delhi, on 25th *Jamad al-Thani* 1012/20th Nov. 1603, when Sirhindi was still in Lahore.² The sad demise of the saint greatly shocked and caused grief to Sirhindi and he immediately left for Delhi, to attend the funeral ceremony. At Delhi, he visited his master’s grave and mourned his death with his sons, wife, khulafa and disciples. All of them later accepted him as their supreme head and Baqi Billah’s chief successor, though few are reported to have objected to it.³

Sirhindi then returned to his native land and engaged himself in academic activities and spiritual exercises. It became his usual practice to visit Delhi every year in the month of *Jamad-i-Thani* to take part in the

¹ *Ibid.*

² Kishmi, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-60.

'Urs of Khawaja Baqi Billah. Simultaneously, he made contacts with the eminent nobles of the Mughal Empire and started correspondence with the important political and religious figures of the time.

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi as Chief Patron of Naqashbandiya Order in India

As the chief patron, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi organized the Naqashbandiya order in India in a systematic manner. He deputed his followers (*Khulafa'*) to important cities and towns in India, to establish and flourish the Naqashbandiya silsilah. They were successful in spreading the ideology and message of the order in various regions of the country.

Among the prominent and senior most *khulafa'* of Sirhindi was Mir Muhammad Nu'man. He was sent to Burhanpur, a famous town of Deccan (present Madhya Pradesh state), which had been an important center of sufis and sufism since its very foundation.¹ Accordingly Nu'man reached Burhanpur and established a *khanqah* there, and devoted himself to the spread of Naqashbandiya silsilah in the region. According to the author of *Mirat-i-Jahan Numa*, a large number of people were benefited from the spiritual radiance of Nu'man and consequently many of them joined his mystic fold.² After the death of Muhammad Nu'man in 1058/1648, his disciple and son-in-law Khawaja Muhammad Hashim

¹ The town was built by Nasir Khan Faruqi, the ruler of Khandesh, in 1400 A.D., in the memory of Sheikh Burhanuddin Gharib, a Khalifa of Sheikh Nizam al-Din Awliya. See Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Farishta, *Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi (Tarikh Farishta)*, Lucknow, 1322 AH, p. 279.

² Muhammad Baqa, *Mirat-i-Jahan Numa*, (MS, in British Museum), Rotograph in the Research Library, Department of History, A.M.U.

Kishmi took over the charge of the Naqashbandiya silsila in Burhanpur. The latter is the author of famous work *Zubdat al-Maqamat*.¹ The work occupies a significant place in the sufi literature of medieval India and is considered a *magnum opus* of the Naqashbandi-Mujaddidi saints. He also compiled the third volume of *Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani*.

The next important place, which Sirhindi chose for the propagation of Naqashbandi teachings, was Agra, the capital of Mughal Empire. Sheikh Badi'udin Saharanpuri was deputed for the task. Instead of the civilian people, Badi'udin under the instructions from Sirhindi chose the Mughal army to be addressed for religious and mystic propagation.² Another team was sent to Jaunpur-an important city of medieval India, under Sheikh Tahir Badekshani, to introduce the order there.³ Syed Mohibullah, another khalifa of Sirhindi was sent to Allahabad for popularizing the Naqashbandi order.⁴

The other deputations sent by Sirhindi to propagate the Naqashbandiya silsilah were, that of Sheikh Ahmad to Deoband,⁵ Sheikh Hameed to Malda (Bengal),⁶ and Sheikh Nur Muhammad to Patna (Bihar).⁷ The sons of Sirhindi, Muhammad Sadiq, Muhammad Sa'id,

¹ He is also the author of *Nusmot al-Quds*. The manuscript of this work belongs to the Leningrad University Library, USSR. (See C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature*, London, 1972, p. 990).

² Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

³ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 299ff.

⁴ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 382-83.

⁵ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-30.

⁶ Kishmi, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

Muhammad Ma'sum played vital role in spreading the order in their native land Sirhind (Punjab).¹ Khawaja Muhammad Sadiq of Badakshan was sent to Lahore (Punjab), who was later succeeded by Sheikh Tahir Lahori.² Sheikh Adam of Banur (Punjab), was deputed to his native land to propagate the Naqashbandiya order there.³

Sirhindi and the 'Ulama of Kashmir

The author of *Zubdat al-Maqamat* and *Hadhrat al-Quds* do not give any information about Sirhindi's missionary activities in Kashmir. So far as Sirhindi's relation with the Kashmiri 'ulama and sufis are concerned, he had been in close contact with some of them during his studies at Siyalkot. Both Maulana Muhammad Kamal and Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi Kubrawi, under whose guidance Sirhindi completed his higher education, belonged to Kashmir. Sirhindi's fast friend Maulana Hasan Kashmiri, who first introduced him to Khawaja Baqi Billah, came from Kashmir. It may be mentioned here that, as to what extent was Sirhindi influenced in his ideas and actions by Kashmiri friends and teachers can be a study of great interest.

All the representatives of Sirhindi deputed to different regions of the sub-continent worked zealously for the development of Naqashbandiya order and attracted a large multitude to their master's mission. On the one hand, they fulfilled the spiritual urges and religious

¹ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 201ff.

² Kishmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 343-46.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

expectations of the masses, on the other hand, they also wielded a considerable and generally sobering influence on the ruling elite which helped them in the organization of their mystic order. The good character of the delegation also impressed the people around them. As they enjoyed respect and reverence from cross-section of the Muslim society, a large number of people joined the Naqashbandiya silsilah. Thus we see that thousands of people joined the Naqashbandiya silsilah and spread far and wide in India, practically in the sub-continent, under the powerful and influential patronage of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

The Last Days of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

Zubdat al-Maqamat of Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, which is our main source about the biography of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, has described the daily routine and the regular worship of the later in detail. According to him Sirhindi strictly followed the Shari'ah and performed all the religious rituals according to the Qur'anic ordinances and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s)

As a routine matter, he used to get up at the mid night, performed ablution and offered the *Tahajud* (the namaz offered after mid-night). Just before the sun rise Sirhindi offered his morning prayer in his mosque situated in the premises of the Khanqah.¹ After *Fajr* (morning prayers) he turned the beads of rosary, reciting the litanies. Thereafter he performed meditations (*maraqabah*) for some time. Later on, he met his

¹*Ibid.*, p. 196.

family members and inquired about their problems and necessities.¹ He took his breakfast there and spend sometime with them. Then he sat alone and recited the Qur'an and then taught his students.² He had his lunch before the noon prayer (*Zuhr*) and followed it by the recitation of the Qur'an. He offered his afternoon prayers (*'Asr*) just after the time began and then he meditated with his companions for half an hour.³ After saying *Maghrib* prayers (just after sun-set), he loudly recited the *Kalima*, i.e., the declaration of faith.⁴ Having offered the night prayers (*'Isha*) and completed all the *wadh'if*, Sirhindi went to bed.⁵

On Monday and Friday nights, Sirhindi repeatedly recited the *darud* (invoking of God's blessings and peace for the Holy Prophet(s)).⁶ He offered the congregational Friday prayer in the main mosque of Sirhind whereas the prayers of *'Idd al-Fitr* (the festival on the eve of completion of Ramadhan) and *'Idd al-Azha* (the festival of sacrifice remembered in the honour of Hadhrat Ibrahim and Isma'il, AS), were offered in his own mosque.⁷ During the first ten days of the month *Dhil-Hijah*, he neither shaved his head nor cut the nails.⁸ Sometimes he visited

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

² *Ibid.*, p. 199.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

the graveyards of the town and prayed for the dead. Previously he would kiss his father's grave but later he gave up this practice.¹

According to Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, during his last days, Sirhindi spent his time mostly in his house and usually did not come out except for the purpose of offering five-time *Namaz* and the congregational Friday prayer. Only his sons and three or four followers were allowed to see him inside the house.² Meanwhile Hashim Kishmi sought his master's permission to depart to Burhanpur to look after his family. The Sheikh permitted him to leave. When Kishmi asked him to invoke for their next meeting in the near future, Sirhindi drew a sigh and said, "I invoke that we may gather in the hereafter."³ The words caused great sorrow and grief to Kishmi.

In *Sha'ban* 1033 AH/May 1624 A.D., Sirhindi confined himself to a particular place in his house. Now he appeared outside only on Friday to offer the weekly congregation whereas daily five time prayers were performed inside the home along with some devout followers, and his own sons.⁴ Badr al-din Sirhindi, the author of *Wisal-i-Ahmadi* states that in 1303 AH/1624 A.D., near about six months before his death, Sirhindi wrote a letter to some Sadiq Khan, wherein he wrote, "You should know that since the Emperor has released me and departed from the royal camp, I have been leading a secluded life. By God's grace I

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

² *Ibid.*, p. 284.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

am passing my time with great satisfaction. As there occurs a natural calamity in this city, it seems that I may not survive this year. Be you pleased and happy”.

When his seclusion completed after six months, the asthma disease, which would attack Sirhindi every year in winter, started to attack him again. He also suffered from high fever on the 17th *Zil Hijjah* 1033/20th Sep., 1624. He felt weakness. Afterwards he recovered to some extent. After about a month he again suffered from high fever. He therefore went to bed but still got up to offer *Tahajjud*. He is said to have stated that it was his last mid-night prayer.¹ Despite his deteriorating physical condition, Sirhindi did not miss any of his prayers and litanies. He asked his family members and followers to perform every rite and ritual in accordance with the rules of Shari‘ah. He also desired to be buried either at any unknown place or near the grave of his father. But on his sons’ submission he left the matter to them.²

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi died on Tuesday 28th *Safar* 1034/30th Nov. 1624, in the morning between the sunrise and the meridian.³ Sirhindi’s dead body was washed and shrouded in accordance with the shari‘ah. Khawaja Muhammad Sa‘id, the elder son of Sirhindi, led the funeral prayer of his father. The corpse was buried in a tomb, near the mosque inside the saint’s own khanqah, where his eldest son Khawaja

¹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 290; Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

Muhammad Sadiq already lied buried. A number of supernatural events (*karamat*) are alleged to have occurred at the time of Sirhindi's death.¹

Works of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani

The most important work, which is also the most important source of thought of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, is the collection of his letters, known as *Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani*. Sirhindi wrote numerous letters to his contemporary 'ulama, sufis, nobles, statesmen and masses. The *Maktubat* give expression not only to his (Sirhindi) heart-felt affections, sentiments and thoughts but also his research in the realm of spiritual realities. It bears witness to his intellectual gift and the originality of thought. It has been one of the most esteemed and popular works in the circles of sufis, many of whom have made it the principal book of study. The *Maktubat* throws light on religious, mystical, social and political themes. In the words of Professor Sheikh Abdur Rashid, the letters of *Mujaddid Alf-i-Thani*, cover a vast field ranging from the technology and metaphysics to politics and missionary activities. According to him these letters are a mirror of the intellectual and spiritual ferment which swept over the spiritually saturated Indian Muslim Society.² The *Maktubat* also form a very important source of Indian history and reflect the socio-political environment of Akbar and Jehangir's reign. These also shed a flood of light on the revivalist efforts

¹ For details see *Ibid.*, (Kishmi), pp. 293-94, and *Ibid.*, (Badr al-Din Sirhindi), pp. 190-93.

² C. H. Philips, ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylone*, London, 1961, p. 132.

of Sirhindi and his followers and disciples, primarily on mystical subjects.¹ Most importantly, the *Maktubat* are the powerful exposition of the ideas of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

The 536 letters of *Maktubat* are divided into three volumes. The first volume entitled *Durr al-Ma'rifat* contains 313 letters and was compiled by Sheikh Yar Muhammad Badakhshi Talqani in the year 1025/1616. The second volume *Nur al-Khalayiq*, was compiled by Khawaja Abdul Haiy in 1028/1619, on the suggestion of Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum. It contains 99 letters. The third volume known as *Ma'arifat al-Haqayiq*, comprise of 114 letters. It was compiled by Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi in 1031/1622. Ten more letters were later added to this volume.²

Other important works of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi are:

***Ithbat al-Nabuwa*³:** Written in Arabic, the work sheds light on the necessity of prophecy in general and the prophecy of Muhammad(s)

¹ Zawwar Husain, *Hadhrat Majaddid-i Alf-i Thani*, Karachi, 1975, p. 683.

² The *Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani* have been frequently published. A complete Persian text was published from Lucknow, Nawal Kishore, 1877. Again published by Sher Muhammad Khan from Delhi, Matba' Ahmadi in 1871. Amritsar, 1331-4 AH; Delhi, Matba' Murtadwi in 1873; Lahore, Nur Company, 1964 and Istanbul (Turkey), 1977.

The *Maktubat* have been translated from Persian into other languages. The first complete Urdu translation by Qadi 'Alim-Uddin was published from Lahore, 1913. The second Urdu translation by Ahmad Sa'id Lahori, Karachi Press, 1971. Another complete Urdu translation by Muhammad Sa'id Ahmad Naqashbandi in three volumes published from Delhi in 1996. This translation of Naqashbandi has been mostly utilized for this dissertation. A complete Arabic translation by Muhammad Murad al-Manzalawi al-Makki under the title *al-Maktubat al-Sharifah, al-Mausum bi al-Durr al-Maknunat Nafisah*, from Makkah, Al-Matbah al-Madinah, 1898-99, 3 volumes.

³ The brochure is reported to have been written in 990-1/1582-3, at Agra (Zawwar Husain, *op. cit.*, pp. 676-77). It has been published in 1303/1963 by the Kutb Khana Idara Mujaddidyah, Karachi along with Urdu translation.

in particular. It also gives Sirhindi's assessment of the situation of Islam in India during the Mughal period.¹

Risala Radd-i-Rawafiz²: The Persian treatise, written in 1002/1593-4,³ in refutation of the Sh'ia beliefs. It also discusses the superiority and importance of *Khulafa-i-Thalatha* (Hadhrat Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman) over all the Companions of Prophet (s). It also describes the different sects of sh'ia and early history of sh'ias in India. Shah Waliullah has written a commentary on this work.⁴

Mabda-wa-Ma'ad⁵: Written in Persian between 1008/1599-1600 and 1019/1610. It contains fifty four short chapters dealing with the various sufi subjects, such as *Bi'at*, "*Qutb-i-Irshad*", *Adab-i-Tariqat*, *Kamalat-i-Auliya*, *Haqiqat-i-Ka'ba*, and *Haqiqat-i-Qur'an*, etc.⁶ Sirhindi frequently refers to the brochure in the first volume of his *Maktubat*. Both the authors of *Zubdat al-Maqamat* and *Hadhrat al-Quds*, quote extensively from it.⁷

¹ Friedmann, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

² Published in 1964 from Lahore, by Idarah Sayyidiyah Mujaddidiya. Also published by Hashmat 'Ali Khan from Rampur, in 1964, with Urdu translation by Ghulam Mustafa Khan along with the text.

³ Kabir Khan, "A Select Bibliography on Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi", *The Muslim World Book Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Winter 1992, pp. 65-71.

⁴ Abul Hasan Zaid Faruqi, *Hadhrat Mujaddid Aur Unke Naqidin*, Delhi, 1977, p. 47.

⁵ Published from Delhi, 1889; Amritsar 1912; Karachi, 1968.

⁶ Zawwar Husain, *op. cit.*, pp. 680-1; Friedmann, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, (Friedmann), p. 59; Kishmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-4, 170-4.

Risala-i-Tahliliya¹: An Arabic treatise, written in 1010/1601-2. It deals with the importance of *Kalima-i-Taiyyiba*-the Muslim confession of faith. Sirhindi is reported to have written the brochure at a time when Akbar and his followers had removed “Muhammad is the Prophet of God” from the *Kalima* and introduced “There is no God but God and Akbar is God’s representative”.² The *Risala* sheds light on *Tawhid* (Monotheism) and *Risalat* (Prophethood).

Ma‘arif Ladunya³: The subject of the Persian work is mysticism. It is said to have been written after Sirhindi had joined the Naqashbandiya order.⁴ It defines the secrets of Divine attributes and sheds light on the hidden meaning of some Qur‘anic verses.⁵

Makashfat al-‘Ainiya⁶: It was compiled by Muhammad Hashim Kishmi in 1641.⁷ It is a collection of different *Ijazat namas* (written authority or permission) that Mujaddid gave to his khalifas from time to time.⁸ It also contains the *Shajras*, spiritual as well as genealogical trees of different silsilahs-Chistiya, Naqashbandiya and Qadiriya.

¹ Published from Lahore in 1965 by Idarah Sayyidiyah Mujaddidiyah. First Urdu translation along with the text by Idarah Mujaddidiyah, Karachi, in 1965.

² For details see, Badayuni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 273.

³ Published from Rampur 1889; Lahore 1956-57; Karachi 1965. Urdu translation along with the text was published from Karachi, Idarah Mujaddidiyah, 1968.

⁴ Friedmann, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁵ Zawwar Husain, *op. cit.*, p. 680.

⁶ The text with Urdu translation was published from Karachi, Idarah Majaddidiyah in 1964.

⁷ Zawwar Husain, *op. cit.*, p. 792.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 682.

***Sharh Ruba'iyat*¹ (Persian):** It is a commentary on two quatrains of Khawaja Baqi Billah, first by Khawaja himself and the second by Sirhindi. Another commentary on the *Sharh* was written by Shah Waliullah under the title of *Kashf al-Ghain fi Sharh Ruba'ytain*. It has been printed by Mujtabai Press, Delhi, in 1310/1892.²

¹ Published from Lahore in 1965. The text with Urdu translation published from Karachi, in 1966.

² Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

CHAPTER III

SHEIKH AHMAD SIRHINDI : THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT - I

Ibn al-‘Arabi, also known as *Sheikh al-Akbar*, is regarded as the first Muslim mystic who has systematically interpreted theology in the light of his mystic thought, and his prominent work *Fatuhāt-Makiyya* is regarded as a monument of sufi scholasticism.¹ Similarly, Shah Wali-u-Allah Dahlawi, has also dealt with the theological issues comprehensively and thoroughly.

Although, like his predecessor Ibn al-‘Arabi and successor Shah Wali-u-Allah, Sirhindi has not written any systematic book dealing about theology or theological issues only, yet his scholarly discussions about some very crucial theological points in his *Muktubat* and other writings carve out a prominent place for Sirhindi as a *Mutakalim* and theologian. His discussions in the *Maktubat*, and elsewhere about the

¹ Fazlur Rehman, *Selected Letters of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi*, Delhi 1984, p. 65.

theological issues like the concept of God, the Man, and the Universe, all speak of his versatility as a theologian. In this chapter, his views about these issues will be discussed at length, in the light of his *Maktubat* and other writings.

(a) CONCEPT OF GOD

If a difference is to be made between a philosopher and a religious believer, it is in their approach towards the belief of God. Whereas for the former God is a matter of discussion and debate, for the latter it is a matter of faith. A philosopher tries to ascertain first whether God exists or not. He is open to the possibilities of both, belief and unbelief. He bases his views about the nature of God and His relation to man and universe, on argument and reasoning.

On the other hand, a religious believer believes in God, loves and worships Him. He does not raise the questions like, what is the nature of God? How is He related to man or universe? His approach towards such issues is to believe in them as told by the Prophets and prescribed in the revealed scriptures.

Sufi Approach to God

But there is another group of people who combine in themselves the characteristics of both the philosophers and religious believers in their approach to understand God. They are mostly known as sufis or mystics in the Muslim history. A mystic like a religious person though having firm faith in God, but at the same time he like a

philosopher tries to realize, understand and comprehend Him and also tries to find out His relation with the universe and man.

A sufi is distinguished from a religious person and a philosopher due to the peculiar nature of his understanding of God. A religious person believes in God, a philosopher tries to comprehend Him, but a sufi tries to realize Him. God, for a sufi is an object of realization rather than an intellectual exercise or simple and ingenuous faith. This is because of the peculiar faculty, which the mystic employs to come in touch with God. The believer's faith in God is based upon the testimony of scriptures and prophets. The philosopher's belief is grounded in rational arguments, which, he thinks lead to assert the existence of God. But sufis undergo what they call an intuitive experience *kashf*, which makes them a resound believer in God.

In the personality of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, we find all the three aspects encompassed together. Though basically a sufi, he was also a philosopher and a religious thinker. Being a Muslim he had complete faith in the authority of the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad(s), as the fountainheads or sources of true knowledge. But he also tried to ground his belief in God, on the basis of intuitive experience. Like other sufis of Muslim tradition, he was trained in the techniques employed in sufi *saluk* for the realization of God.

There were two crucial points or stages in Sirhindi's spiritual odyssey towards the realization of God. At the first stage, he like many other sufis entertained a pantheistic (*wujudi*) view of God but in the

next stage he reverted to uphold a theistic conception of God, which is also the conception based on the Qur'an and the Hadith. But before discussing Sirhindi's concept of God let us briefly define theistic and pantheistic concepts of God in general and their representative thinkers.

Theistic Concept of God

According to theistic concept of God the universe is created by a Deity whose nature we can grasp on the image of our own selves. Human personality comprises his body and a transcendental soul or self—the latter being essential and the former being contingent or accidental. God is also known like-wise through His attributes. According to theism God is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent and so on. God manifests Himself through these attributes and man comprehends Him through them.

Theism also means that God, although source of cosmos and human existence is yet distinct from them. God is self-conscious and self-willed. He is present every-where in this universe, but is not a part of it. It is never possible that a man or universe be identified with Him or submerged into Him.¹

Pantheistic Concept of God

The pantheistic conception of God is opposed to the theistic or personal concept of God. Pantheism denies the personal or qualitative character of God.² According to it, any attempt to attribute qualities to

¹ *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 97. According to theism, the relationship between man and God is that of worshipper and worshipped. Man prays to God, fears Him, loves and worship Him. When he is in distress, he seeks help from Him and when he is in abundance, he praises and thanks Him. The theistic conception is also called, the personal or transcendental view of God.

² *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IX, p. 609.

God will amount to limit this existence. God is wholly impersonal and absolute. To attach personality to God is anthropomorphism.¹

Pantheism also denies the distinction between universe and God. The only reality is God and besides God nothing exists even in a relative sense. God is not transcendental to or apart from universe.² Universe has come into existence not through God's act of creation but it has emanated from His being.³

In the Muslim history there emerged various schools of thought, with varied conception of God, some theistic and other pantheistic in nature. The earliest theological controversy that cropped up among the Muslim thinkers was about the issue of *dhat* (essence) and *sifat* (attributes) of God. The main point of controversy was the relation between the attributes of God and His essence. The controversy gave rise to two famous theological schools of thought in Muslim history-the Mu'tazalites⁴

¹ The attribution of a human form or personality to God, animal or a thing.

² *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 609.

³ As a corollary to their impersonal conception of God, pantheists do not treat God as an object of worship or love. Worshipping or loving, implies the duality of the subject and object, which pantheists deny. God, according to them, is not an object of worship but an object of realization. In reality man is not distinct from God. He is one with God.

⁴ Ma'tazilah creed made its appearance nearly two centuries after the migration (*Hijrah*) of Holy Prophet to Madinah. They were thorough rationalists and believed that the arbiter of whatever is revealed has to be theoretical reason.

Ma'tazalites call themselves people of unity and justice (*ahl al-tawhid wa al-adl*). By justice they imply that it is incumbent on God to requite the obedient for their good deeds and punish the sinner for their misdeeds. By unity they imply the denial of the divine attributes. Undoubtedly, they admit that God is knowing, powerful, and seeing, but their intellect does not allow them to admit that the divine attributes are separable and different from the divine essence. The reason for this view of theirs is that if the attributes of God are not considered to be identical with the essence of God (*dhat*), "plurality of eternals" would necessarily result and the belief in unity would have to be given up. This, in their opinion, is clear unbelief (*kufir*). Unity and justice are the basic principles of the belief of the Mu'tazilites and this is the reason why they call themselves "people of unity and justice". The other beliefs of Mu'tazilites are corollary of these two (Sharif, *op. cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 199-200)

and the 'Asharites.¹ However, the main representative of pantheistic concept of God in the Muslim history was Ibn al-'Arabi.²

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi's Concept of God

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, being champion of the cause of Qur'anic orthodoxy expounds his doctrine of transcendence of God. He emphasizes His transcendental and personal qualities. This doctrine, in his own terminology is called *Tawhid-i-shuhudi* (Unity of perception). Sirhindi

¹ This philosophico-religious school of thought in Islam developed during the fourth and fifth/tenth and eleven centuries. The founder of this school was abu al-Hasan 'Ali bin Isma'il al-'Ashrai (d. 330/941) and is named after him. As opposed to the rationalist *kalam* of the Mu'tazilites, it developed an orthodox Islamic theology or orthodox *kalam*.

According to the Asharites, God is one, unique, existent Being. He is not a substance, not a body, not an accident, not limited to any direction, and not in any space. He possesses attributes such as knowledge, power, life, will. The Ash'arites, as against the Mu'tazilites, held that, "God has attributes which inhere eternally in Him and are in addition to His essence". These attributes are eternal, but they are neither identical with His essence, nor are they quite different from or other than His essence. (Sharif, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 226-227).

² According to Ibn al-'Arabi there is only One Being there, and nothing exists besides it. The One Being is absolutely indivisible and homogeneous. Being, however, determines itself, and as a result of this self-determination (*ta'ayyun*) distinctions and differences emerge in Being and multiplicity proceeds from Unity. But in the process, Being neither divides nor rarifies itself. It is same One Being which manifests in its entirety, here in one form and there in another form, without suffering division or rarification. Being which determines itself in various forms is the Being of God. It cannot be other than God; for there are no two beings there. It follows that the being of God is the being of the world; the difference between them is ruled out for the same reason. To Ibn al-'Arabi, the relation between God and the world is that of *tajalli*, self-uncovering or self-revelation, and not of cause and effect, or the relation of the Creator and created, as theologians believe. (Ansari, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-4).

discusses his doctrine within the framework of Qur'anic theology as well as on a deeper philosophical plane. In one of his letters, addressed to Hirday Ram, he writes:

“...Ours and Yours’, nay, of all the inhabitants of universe, i.e., of heaven and earth, and of high and low, sustainer is only One. He is unparallel and unequal. There is nothing to resemble Him or equal to Him and He is devoid of shape and form. It is impossible for God to have father or son.....”¹

In another letter, addressed to ‘Abdul ‘Aziz Jaunpuri, he writes,

“Praise be to Allah Who made the possibility, the mirror of necessity and made non-existence the manifestation of existence. Although the necessity and existence are the two attributes of the perfection of God, God is beyond and beyond, again beyond and beyond and once again beyond and beyond to all kinds of

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 167.

names and attributes (*'Asma wa Sifat*),
interiority (*Batun*), and exteriority (*Zahur*),
expressions and emanations....”¹

Relation Between the Essence of God and His Attributes

God, according to Sirhindi, is “necessary Being” and the world, “possible being”. There are different levels of the being of God. On His first level He is absolute, i.e., even His attributes do not exist in any way separate from Him. Even it cannot be said that “God exists” because existence is after all an attribute. We can only say-though it too would be somewhat crude and misleading-that God is. This primordial level, in the words of Sirhindi, is the level of “implicitness” (*ijmal*). It is not the fact that the attributes utterly do not exist. They do exist but in the being of God. They are many but undifferentiated, and, despite being undifferentiated and many, they are identical with God. Sirhindi says that the apprehension of this level of God is impossible for our intellect. Only through the eyes of spiritual illumination or inspiration (*nazr-i-kashfe*), this knowledge can be attained.²

Sirhindi’s position regarding the attributes of God is indeed unique. On the one hand he wants to establish the absoluteness of the

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 1.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 114.

being of God, which could otherwise, lead him to deny the attributes to Him. But on the other hand, he had to explain the existence of world, without impairing the transcendence of God, ~~he feels compelled to affirm the~~ attributes. Independent attributes are not at all essential for God as an absolute Being. He is there without having the attributes of existence. He is alive without requiring the quality of life. He knows, sees, hears, wills, speaks, due to His own being, and for these He is by no means dependent upon His attributes.¹

In the history of Muslim theology, Mu'tazilites and later on many sufis denied the independent existence of attributes. Sirhindi also argues that there are great difficulties in accepting the theory of independent existence of attributes. He further says that if there are (independent) attributes, there are two possibilities. They will be either possible or necessary. If they are possible, they are subject to death and decay (*Hadith wa Haduth*). On the other hand they cannot be necessary because their multiplicity would go against the concept of *Tawhid*. Moreover, if they are possible, it would necessarily imply that they are separate from the essence of God.²

God Exists by His Essence and not with His Existence

Sirhindi, however, says that the difficulty can be resolved. He explains, we may say that God exists by His Essence and not with His Existence, whether this existence is identical with His essence or separate

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 26.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 2.

from it. Moreover we can say that the attributes of God are with His essence and not with His existence as there is no existence of God on this (primordial) level.¹ The rejectionist position of sufis is that of “not-other-than-Him” (*La Ghara Hu* لا غيره) as against, “not-He” (*La Hu-wa* لا هو). But for Sirhindi it is more sound to affirm *La-Ghaira-Hu* while affirming also, *La Hu-wa*.²

Sirhindi's adoption of proposition of *La-Huwa-wa-La Ghaira-Hu* (لا هو ولا غيره) was earlier adopted by Muslim 'ulama and the sufis also. His belief in it and also of his predecessors is rooted in the mystic realization, and revelation as received by the Prophets. Its comprehension is beyond the power of discursive intellect. From the logical point of view, there is even a contradiction in holding this proposition. What is here said is that, attributes are not identical with God's essence as they are multiple. And it is also said that they are not separate from essence although multiple. One proposition clearly negates the other. Attributes can be either identical with essence or other than it. But Sirhindi says that the illogicality of this proposition simply means that our intellect cannot be a sure guide to it. Indeed, intellect or reason has no capacity either to confirm or reject its truth because its knowledge does not come under the purview of its function.³

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 114.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 112.

Sirhindi was constrained to admit the attributes due to his desire of explaining the universe within the framework of his transcendentalism. By introducing the presence of attributes between God and universe, he on the one hand, denied any direct connection between the two and, on the other, retained the position of God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Ibn al-‘Arabi and his followers upheld their pantheism only by denying the attributes.

Why God needs Attributes

In reply to the question as to why there is the need of attributes of God if His own being is self-sufficient for all what is otherwise supposed to be accomplished by His attributes, Sirhindi says, “God, although self-sufficient for all His perfection, yet needs the attributes for the creation of the things. Because He himself is quite transcendental, pure, great, mysterious and perfect. Self-sufficiency is proved about Him. And He is utterly unconnected with the things, ‘for God is free of all needs from all creation’,¹ and there are attributes which have produced adumbrations by descending to a lower level and which have at any rate some connections with the things. Had they not been (functioning as) mediating agency, it would not have been conceivable to derive any other thing from things.”²

To sum up, thus, we can say that at the first level of God’s existence, He is an absolutely absolute being and nothing can be like Him.

¹ Al-Qur‘an, XXXIX/6.

² Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. III, Letter No. 26.

He is implicit, unexpressed and self-contained. He is attributeless-even without the attributes of existence (in the ordinary sense of the word). But at the second level of its descent, the unillustrious Divine Light (*Nur-Aqdas*) expresses itself, if at all, into existence-nothing other than it. Thus, for Sirhindi, the first determination in the being of God is the determination of existence; all other determinations follow and are subservient to this existential determination. Sirhindi says that although the word "determination" (*Ta'een*) does not suit to his taste, he dares use it because it is in keeping with the academic tradition.¹

It may be clear from the above that in his theory of the concept of God, Sirhindi is mainly concerned with affirming the absoluteness of God on the one hand and on the other, allowing Him the predication of attributes. God is absolute which implies that attributes, if they exist at all, are identical with His essence. This was the position originally held by the Mu'tazilites and later accepted by sufis. Negatively it amounted to the denial of the attributes being separate from God's essence. But as this theory was at least apparently not in conformity with the Qur'anic theology, and philosophically created many difficulties in accounting for the existence of world as separate from God, philosophers-theologians like 'Asharites and some sufis took the position of, 'neither the essence and not other than it' *La 'Ain wa La-Ghaira-Hu* (لا عين ولا غيره). Since Sirhindi too wanted to affirm God's transcendence, he retained the 'Asharite position. He said that God at His

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 13.

primordial level is absolute with no attributes external to Him, but, descending to a lower level, He may be said to assume the attribute of life, which is the fundamental attribute of God. Other attributes are merely the derivatives of the attributes of life. The partial affirmation of the attributes of God by Sirhindi contradicts the position of rejection adopted by Ibn al-‘Arabi¹ and his followers. Thus Sirhindi presents a theistic conception of God. His God is one, absolute and transcendental. He is beyond the beyond (*wara‘ al-wara‘*).

(b) CONCEPT OF UNIVERSE

To develop a theology of creation of the universe has been an important problem for the thinkers from the distant past. This problem has been faced particularly by those mystics and philosophers who claim their inspirations and intuitions to be rooted in some divine sources.

¹ According to Ibn al-Arabi, Being is indeterminate; it is the stage of *La ta‘ayyun* or indeterminateness of the Unity. In its Descent or Determination it passes through five stages. The first two are *‘ilmi* or cognitive and the last three are *kharji* or Existential. In the first descent, the unity becomes conscious of itself as pure being, and the consciousness of *sifat* is only *Ijma‘i* i.e., general - it is implicit. In the second descent, the unity becomes conscious of itself as possessing the attributes; that is the stage of *Sifat-i-Tafsili*- attributes in detail- it is explicit. These two descents seem to be conceived as conceptual rather than actual; for they are out of time, and the distinction of *Dhat* and *sifat* or its attributes is only *Dhani* (Mental)- then began the real actual descents. The third descent, therefore, is *Ta‘ayyun-i ruhi* (the determination of the soul), the Unity breaks itself into many souls, such as angels. The fourth of its descents is *Ta‘ayyuni mithali* (the determination of ideas), thereby the universe of ideas comes into being. And the fifth descent is *Ta‘ayyuni jasdi* or (determination of bodies); it yields the phenomenal or physical being. These stages are only gradual realizations of the capacities that were already latent in the attributes.

This brings out that for Ibn al-‘Arabi *Dhat* or Being is essentially identical with the *Sifat* (attributes), and the attributes express themselves in *tajalliyyat* i.e., manifestation or modes which are the universe and its objects. (Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89).

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi also falls in the same category. But, before going in detail about Sirhindi's concept of universe, let us briefly discuss the other concepts and theories about the subject.

Qur'anic Concept of Universe

God, according to the Qur'an is a personal and transcendental Being who creates the universe out of His will and through His absolute power does anything He likes. Two things follow from the various verses of the Qur'an¹ about the subject. First God's act of creation is absolute i.e., God is the creator both in the sense of producing the material and arranging it. Nothing existed but God brought something into existence, which evolved to take the shape of universe. Universe is neither the transformation of something existing prior to it nor the manifestation of God Himself in any sense of the phrase. It is an entirely new occurrence, a total creative event. Second important point is that a tacit but sure duality has been asserted between God and universe. God being the Creator and the universe being the creation maintain between each other a strict separation and duality, which, however, does not rule out the close connection between the two existences. God, the creator, must be and is, related with His creation, but more important is the fact that He transcends His creation. Thus an absolute creativity of the creation and complete transcendence

¹ The verses of the Qur'an are, 96/1, 35/1, 41/11, 21/31, 7/54, 6/73, 19/35, 10/3, 30/27.

of the Creator are two main characteristics of the Qur'an about the theory of world creation.¹

A Hadith directly points out to the fact that God existed with all His hidden treasure such as attributes of knowledge, power, will, creativity etc. when He wished to be known. And He created the universe. The tradition goes as, I was a hidden Treasure; I wished that I should be known, so created the creatures."²

Ibn al-'Arabi's Concept of Universe

Like Plotinus³ Muslim philosophers too, stressed that the attributes of knowledge, will, power etc., are eternally there with God. And hence God must be creating the world eternally. Ibn 'Arabi who was chief representative of this trend of thought, denies any temporal priority of God to the universe. "It would be meaningless", he says, "to talk about a temporal interval or a gap between the One and the many, or God and the universe or the Necessary and the contingent, if necessity and contingency are regarded (as he regards them) as only two aspects of the

¹ According to Plotinus theory of Emanation, the emergence of universe from the being of God had three stages. In the beginning there was only God. Then He cognized Himself. In His cognition He did not conceive any thing external to His Being and the way of His cognition is such that the knower, the known and the process of knowing are all fundamentally one and the same. Through this act of God's cognition spirit came into existence, which was the emanation from God. Matter comes in the end in this process of emanation and represents darkness and evil. When the spirit interacts with the matter, sensory things came into existence. (*Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vol., VI, p. 354). It may be seen that in the above exposition, God and the universe are not temporarily divided, nor the universe is a result of God's will. Both these points are opposed to the Qur'anic theory of creation.

² كُنْتُ كَنْزاً مَخْفِياً لَا أَحِبُّ أَنْ أَعْرَفَ فَخَلَقْتُ الْخَلْقَ

³ Cf. *Supra*, f.n.1.

One.”¹ By this Ibn al-‘Arabi means that if we say that the universe is caused or created at all, it must not be understood in the sense of the universe being originated or created in time or from nothing, for Ibn al-‘Arabi does not admit creation *ex nihilo*.² Ibn al-‘Arabi also asserts that there is only one reality which is called both God and universe. Universe as a separate being is simply non-existent. It is nothing but God externalized or, in other words, an illusory process wherein God may be said to be perpetually expressing Himself.

The above viewpoints of the thinkers and philosophers were necessary to be presented in view of the fact that Sirhindi frequently refers to and criticizes them in his letters, as we shall see in course of the discussion.

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi’s Concept of Universe

Sirhindi’s view on the issue revolves round the point that there is a contradiction between existence (*wujud*) and non-existence (*‘Adm*). *Wajud* has its obvious ontic status. It is an independent and absolute existence and that existence is God. Opposed ontologically to God is *‘Adm* (non-existence) which by definition is the name of something which is mere name, without any ontic status. The existence is termed by Sirhindi as “external presence” (*Thabut kharji*), when he says “opposite to non-existence is external presence”.³

¹ A. E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul ‘Arabi*, Cambridge 1939, p. 29.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. III, Letter No. 58.

In addition to two realms-pure entities and pure non-entities, Sirhindi also speaks of a third realm which is an admixture of reality and non-reality or existence and non-existence. This realm is called 'the Imaginary Realm' (*martaba wahm*). This realm is created out of a conflux of existence and non-existence, or we can say that it is neither fully real nor fully unreal and also that it is both real and at the same time unreal.¹ The things of the universe belong to this realm of imagination. Our universe, says Sirhindi, is at the stage of imagination (*martaba hiss wa wahm* سرتبه جس واهم). Worldly objects have dual nature of being both real and non-real, i.e., existent and non-existent. They cannot be said to enjoy a full ontic and real existence since that belong to God. Nor can they be said to be completely non-existent because it is the outcome of the existence, which has caused them to come into being.²

Before proceeding further and in order to have a clear understanding of Sirhindi's views about the issue, let us consider a letter, which has direct bearing upon the problem. In letter 109 of Vol., III of *Maktubat*, he writes,

"By the state of imagination (*Dar Martaba Wahm*) is meant that the world is an appearance (reflection) without its independent existence. Just as the image of Zaid in the mirror, which is a reflection, is an appearance without its own independent existence. In the mirror no image exists; in it there is only appearance of the

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No.109.

image. And it has been shown through genuine intuition and the inspiration that universe is created like this state by God through His perfect power. He, through His perfect wisdom, has given existence to (what is) mere appearance. In this state, although the appearance is without real existence, yet it has become appearance with existence, because the creation by God is with the intention of (giving it) existence”.

Two important points can be inferred from above passage. First is that Sirhindi considers the universe like the image in a mirror. This point has two important implications. First, it shows that the universe has no independent reality and it depends for its existence upon God just as the image in the mirror cannot be there unless there is someone other than the mirror to cast its reflection upon the mirror. Second, it also proves that essentially universe has no ontological existence, as the image in the mirror does not possess any existence. The latter is mere reflection and so is the whole universe.

Universe has Appearance with Existence

The second important point which can be derived from the above quoted letter is that although the universe like a mirror image, is a reflection without the real existence, in as much as God created it with the intention of giving it existence, it may also be said to have appearance with existence. The important thing here is the intention of God. That is, for Sirhindi, although the universe lacks ontological existence, it has been so made by God that it appears as existent. And appearing as existent

means that for all practical purposes it does exist. In other words we can say that relations between various objects, their functions, their modes of manifestations, etc., are all such that they be taken as if they are really existent. The nature of our interaction with them should not be supposed of their being mere illusory but rather on the view that they are really there.

Universe Essentially Unreal and non-Existent but Factually Real and Existent

Thus in the eyes of Sirhindi, the universe is essentially unreal and non-existent in comparison to the Reality and Existence of God but factually it is real and existent. It is real as a matter of fact because God has made it so. Thus the contradiction of its being 'appearance without existence' and at the same time being 'appearance with existence' is resolved. Because it is a reflection without existence which appears with existence. In other words, for Sirhindi, the universe is an appearance, which appears existent although in essence it is non-existent.

Here it may be noted that Sirhindi's illusion to mirror-image for the illustration of the nature of the universe perfectly fits into his philosophy of universe. The universe as described above, is an appearance without its own independent existence but which has been given existence. And same is the case with mirror-image. It has also a reflective existence because something is seen there as being existent although in fact it does not exist. There is no such thing as a body of man inside the mirror as it is apparently seen. The existence of physical universe is also reflected in as much as it does not possess any externality.

In order to illustrate how the things of the universe have been made to appear existent by God in spite of their essence being non-being, Sirhindi cites an example. He says that suppose we take a stick and put its one end in fire so that it catches flame. Now by holding the other end we rotate the stick quickly round circle-wise. Through this quick rotation, aluminous circle will be formed. Obviously, this circle is unreal in itself. And Sirhindi aptly calls it “the imaginary circle” (*Da‘ira Mawhuma*).¹ What is actually real is the flame at the end of the stick. Sirhindi calls it as “Luminous point” (*Nuqta Jawala*). He says that what is really existent is the luminous point. The circle which is created due to the movement of stick is simply non-existent in the sense of being ‘externally present’. But it has got an imaginary status. In the words of Sirhindi, “it has acquired presence in the state of imagination and possessed light and shining in this state by way of adumbration (*Zilyat*)”.² His point is that just as the dimly illuminated circle produced by the luminous point has no real existence and yet appears to be existent by virtue of having been caused by the luminous point, so also the universe has no real existence but is created as being existent due to its having been caused by God.³ Both the circle and universe are in essence non-being but appears to possess being, owing to their having an external source, namely, the luminous point and God, which are the real causes for them respectively.

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No.58.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

To say that non-existence (*'Adm*) is the essence of all forms is the important point in the whole philosophy of creation of Sirhindi. Sirhindi here made a radical departure from the long established sufi tradition bequeathed by Ibn al-'Arabi and his followers according to which the essence of the things were *A'yan-i-Thabita* (fixed prototypes). The theory of *A'yan-i-Thabita* expounded by Ibn al-'Arabi and as interpreted by Sirhindi himself, admits albeit in a relative sense, the external existence of physical things.¹

On the basis of theory of *A'yan-i-Thabita* of Ibn al-'Arabi, his position is that, for him the essence of the things are the entities, which have accrued during the process of God's creative descent. Or, in other words, they are the 'epistemic images' (*Sur 'Ilmiya*) of God's names and attributes. In contrast to this, for Sirhindi, their realities are non-existences (*'Admat*). Thus while as Ibn al-'Arabi admits indirectly the

¹ According to the theory of *A'yan-i-Thabita*, as expounded by Ibn al-'Arabi, God, who is an absolute indeterminate being, revealed Himself to Himself through an act of self-knowledge. Through this act He caused in His own being a sort of determination and the event is accordingly called as *al-Ta'ayeen al-Awal* (first determination). In this state of *Ta'ayeen*, he saw in Himself His external attributes, which were also said to be as *a'yan* or prototypes. These were really inside the being of God but in another, less deeper sense, outside Him. That is, inasmuch as they constituted the essence of God, they were not outside His being, but inasmuch as they were also the modes (of God's manifestation), they were also external to Him.

The prototypes, in their second aspect, i.e., the aspect in which they are the modes of God's external expression, are called the *huwiyyah* (Thatness) of the things as against the term *mahiyyah* (Essence), which describes their status as something innate and inside the Being of God. Infact, Ibn al-'Arabi frequently uses the words like *Tanazzulat* (Descensions), *Baa-that* etc. which covertly indicate to their having, in some sense, an external status.

The creative process, called Descent or *Tanazzulat*, through which He externalizes Himself and makes His attributes concrete have five stages. They have been discussed elsewhere (see Supra f.n.1, p. 98).

external presence of things other than God (which are nevertheless God's own names and attributes), Sirhindi denies this position and insists on their being essentially and externally non-existent.¹

Relation between Universe and God

Sirhindi explains the relation between universe and God by comparing his position to other parallel theories, which are in vogue among the sufis. He says that among the three groups of sufis,² one is that which holds the existence of universe to have been caused by God's creative activity and power. According to this group whatever goodness and finer qualities the universe possesses is from God. Even about themselves they think they are nothing but mere appearances (*Shuba*). A person who lives in this state is like one who is bearing borrowed clothes and knows that his clothes are borrowed. He is so obsessed with the fact of the borrowedness of clothes that about himself he thinks that he is naked.³

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. III, Letter No. 58.

² Among the other two groups, mentioned by Sirhindi, one is that which treats universe to be an adumbration of God. According to them universe exists in externality but by way of adumbration (*Be-Tariq Zilliyat*) and not as something real in itself (*Be-Tariq Asalat*). The existence of universe is dependent upon the existence of God in the same way as the shadow of a thing depends upon the thing of which it is a shadow, i.e., the thing itself. These people further believe that whatever changes occur in the universe do not affect the being of God although they are caused by Him. (*Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 160)

The third group is that of unitists who also treat universe to be an adumbration of God. But contrary to the people of above group they do not believe in the externality of adumbration. The adumbrations are, for them, rather in the state of imagination (*Hiss*) only. In reality and externality the universe is nothing except nothingness. Only God exists in externality. (*Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 160).

³ *Ibid.*

These people, according to Sirhindi, also deny all kinds of kinship between God and universe. God is transcendental and has absolutely no attachment of connection with the phenomenal universe. They completely rule out the possibility of the universe being in any sense identical with or a part of being of God. God is beyond all such relations. Nonetheless they admit the relation of Creator and creation and of master and slave, between God and His creation.

Sirhindi identifies himself with this group saying that these people are in perfect agreement with the viewpoints of sunni school of thought (*ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'a*) in all the fundamental beliefs which are derived from the Qur'an, the Traditions and the consensus of jurists (*Ijma'*). The only difference between these people and dialecticians (*Mutakalimun*) is that whereas for the latter the beliefs are acquired through reason and logic, the former arrive at them through intuition and inspiration.¹

It can be concluded that although the universe is having existence and attributes (*wujud-wa sifat*) as the adumbrations of the externality of God's being, it cannot, by any means, be treated as identical with God.² The things of phenomenal universe are grounded in non-beings. God created the things out of nothing in the state of imagination and gave them stability and permanence so that they

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No.160.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No.1.

appeared to be real without being really real. In the words of Sirhindi himself, they were “appearance without existence” which appeared as “appearance with existence”. Thus although God and universe are not completely disconnected from each other, the two are, however, separate in the sense that they have different and distinct qualities and functions.¹

(c) CONCEPT OF MAN

It has been a matter of controversy and debate from the times immemorial as to know, what is man? The philosophers, the mystics and the men of knowledge and wisdom, have debated the quest for a long time. The discussion has been centered around the point whether man is his body or something else besides the body, or the soul or spirit or mind. Let us briefly describe the various concepts about Man.

To some philosophers the man is “nothing apart from his body”. To them human personality could be understood only in terms of the material elements which constitute and comprise his body, and if at all there is a soul, it is a part of the body or the functional property of those material elements. On the other hand the mystics and spiritualists believed that the soul or spirit is essential to man and not his body. In respect of his physical constitution, man is only a member of the larger animal species and he shares with animals many characteristics. But the reasoning is the faculty by virtue of which man distinguishes himself from animals. And

¹ Ibid, Vol. III, Letter No.71.

‘reasoning’ is the function of soul. Thus, the soul, though immanent in the body, is yet transcendental to it. It is not a part of the body, rather apart from it, though inside it.

Religious Perspective

While the soul constitutes a subject of speculative debate for philosophers, it is something of a necessary presence in the doctrinal system of religious men and women. The religions of the world, if they share among themselves any particular tenet, it is certainly the independent existence of soul. In almost all the world religions we find a concern for man’s spirit. All religions agree to consider man to live on a plane higher than his material plane of living. The spirit, which is believed to be the real cause for man’s transcendental mode of living, is metaphysically admitted.

Mysticism, which articulates the spiritualistic dimension of religion, revolves round the notion of soul or spirit. The history of mysticism is the history of the spiritual progress in which an effort is made to achieve the ultimate goal of self-realization, which also mounts, to the realization of God.

What is true of mysticism in general is true of sufism in particular. Like the philosophers who had speculated upon the nature of soul, the sufis too made it a subject of intuitive thinking. As could be expected, all the Muslim saints tried to ground their ideas regarding soul

in the basic Islamic sources-the Qur'an and Hadith, though they still disagree on many issues.¹

Qur'anic Concept of Soul

According to the Qur'an, the soul is transcendental and unique in character, qualitatively radically different from material bodies. The Qur'an has employed two different terms to describe the nature of these two kinds of entities in their relation to God. The word *khalq* (creation) is applied to the emergence of all things except soul, for which the word *Amr* (command) has been specifically used. The Qur'an says, "To Him belong the creation and the command".² At another place it says, "They ask you about the soul; Say, the soul is from the command of my Lord".³

On the basis of these two terms, sufis talk of two different worlds, one is called by them as '*Alam Amr* (the realm of command) and the other as '*Alam khalq* (the realm of creation). The former is obviously the world of spirit, which is transcendental in its character while the later is the world of bodies, which has the qualities of extension and dimension.

¹ That the soul is a transcendental substance distinct from the body was for them a consensus article of faith. But they differed as to its real nature of origin from God and also on the question how its different parts function.

² The Qur'an, VII/54

³ The Qur'an, XVIII/85

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi's Concept of Man

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi frames his concept of Man on the above (Qur'anic) approach. To him soul belongs to the realm of command. But on the question whether the soul is transcendental and unique, he is equivocal and ambivalent. At one place he proposes the view that since the soul is an emanation from God and belongs to the world of command, therefore, by an ontological necessity it possesses the qualities of transcendentness and uniqueness, which characterize God.¹ But at another place he relegates it to be a part of the contingent world in spite of its connection with the transcendental realm. "It should be known that the spirit, though it has connection with the unparallel realm, but in reality it is inside the circle of contingents", writes Sirhindi.² In another letter he talks of heart (*Qalb*)- he apparently takes the word to be synonymous with soul, as being an intermediary (*Barzakh*) between the material world and the spiritual world.³

It may be pointed out here, that since Sirhindi's interest in discussing the nature of soul is prompted by the religious and ethical considerations rather than any independent philosophical purpose, he generally does not care to embroil himself in giving arguments to support his contentions and conclusions. This is why it is not possible to tell exactly what were the reasons for his taking two apparently in-consistent positions. It may, however, be conjectured that when he said the soul to be

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No.289.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No.285.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I., Letter No.264.

fully transcendental, his attention might have been on the fact of having its source in God which is an absolutely transcendental Being. A transcendental God could accrue only a transcendental soul. But when his mind is drawn to the fact of soul being connected with body and the fact that both interact and influence each other, he was led to relegate at least a part of it to be belonging to the material realm.

Describing the essence of soul, Sirhindi writes, “the essence of human personality, i.e., this seat which constitutes his ‘I’, his self, is obviously his soul. Because it is the soul by virtue of which man becomes aware of his personal existence. The self-consciousness is to be grounded in non-existence (*‘Adm*) just as the other things of the world are grounded in non-existence and derived from it whatever existence they possess. And just as the physical things were said to have come to existence only after Existence cast its reflection in the mirrors of non-existence, so our self is also being said to possess existence through the same procedure. Physical things are basically non-real and so are our selves.”¹

It is on the basis of this fact that Sirhindi argues that the conception of annihilation (*Fana*) does not require the extinction of existence because according to him there is no existence of man (the phenomenal self) there to be annihilated.²

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 62.

² According to Sirhindi, *Fana* was psychological and epistemological rather than ontological. He was of the view that *Fana* is a state of mind in which man thinks all his virtues and good qualities, even his existence, to be derived from and dependent upon God. This feeling of absolute non-possession was for him *Fana*. Thus *Fana* is the state of mind in which man exists yet he is completely devoid of any feeling of existence.

Sirhindi further explains the two selves of man, one which was real belonging to the realm of command, was called soul (*Ruh*) and the other which was unreal belonging to the realm of creation and was called rational soul (*Nafs Natiqa*). Both constitute the personality, the 'I' of man on two different planes. The rational soul or the self connected with the body constitutes the 'I' in a purely phenomenal perspective of man. A man who for some reasons is not aware of his spirituality, has nonetheless a sense of 'I ness'. Obviously this 'I' must be his phenomenal self. It is subject to the limitations, compulsions and constraint of the physical world and basically unreal. 'The rational soul is very instigating or lower soul (*Nafs-i Amarah*) which requires cleaning'.¹ But the soul (*Ruh*) constitutes the self of man in a deeper, profounder and real sense. It is transcendental, real and not subject to the natural laws that govern the cosmos. Thus we see that Sirhindi employs two different terms and very clearly says that the rational soul belongs to '*Alam khalq*' whereas the soul (*Ruh*) belongs to '*Alam Amr*'.

Man-A Comprehensive Entity

According to Sirhindi, the fact that human being has certain faculties which make it to belong to the phenomenal world and certain others which enable to transcend this world, makes it a unique creature among the other creatures of this world. By virtue of this fact he has become, in the words of Sirhindi, a comprehensive entity (*Nuskhai Jami'a*). Whatever is present in the whole cosmos is proved to be in the

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 34.

being of man. And the centre of his being is obviously the soul (*Ruh*) or heart. If man is a micro-cosm, says Sirhindi, it is so because of his soul and heart rather than the intellect and rational soul.¹

The heart has been described by sufis as the comprehensive reality (*Haqiqat Jami'*) for the above reason. It has been said that the heart is so vast that if the heavens and whatever is there in them is put into a corner of a saint's heart, it will not bring any difference because the heart is spaceless and the heavens and the objects beyond heavens are also without space.² Sirhindi, however, says that the above description of heart by some sufis is not to be taken in a literal sense. The truth is that not the things themselves but their microscopic prototypes are represented in the heart. It is in fact like the mirror in which only the images of the things are represented, not the things themselves.³

Man's Uniqueness-Combination of Creation and Command

Although man's comprehensiveness is fundamentally due to his having a soul and a heart, says Sirhindi, the fact that he possesses a body is not of the least significance. It has been already mentioned that man partakes both of spiritual and material realms. To the former belong his soul and heart and to the latter belongs his body. It is out of this combination that there emerges the uniqueness, which is the characteristic

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 95.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

of man. Pure spirituality is the possession of angels but they are not considered as privileged and unique as man. Man's personality or the 'intuitive form' (*Haiyat Wajdani*) as Sirhindi says, is a product of the combination of creation and command. And this intuitive form is possessed by none other than man. "This form is a unique wonder and strange sample".¹

Relation Between Soul and Body

The nature of relationship between soul and body is same as the relationship between God and the physical universe. Just as about God it is said that He is neither inside the universe nor outside it and neither attached to it, nor completely unattached, so is the relation between soul and body, according to Sirhindi.² As God sustains the universe, so the soul sustains the body (*Qayyum*).³

Relationship Between the Act of God (*Takwin*) and the Human Action—Freedom of Will

The issue of relationship between the Act of God—which according to Sirhindi is eternal and indivisible which brings into existence the entire diversity of the universe⁴—and the human action, is the central point of Islamic theology and a point absolutely vital to the moral outlook

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 307.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 287.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 266; Vol. II, Letter No. 67.

of Islam. On the subject, Sirhindi is critique of both the Mu'tazilites¹ and the Ash'arites.²

While elaborating the issue, Sirhindi first highlights the essential point in the Sunni creed on the question, i.e. that every voluntary human act must be so construed that it should be attributable morally to man and ontologically to God. "The *Ahl al-Sunnah* say that the voluntary actions of man are in the realm of Divine power with regard to God's creative agency and in the realm of human power in another way., viz., through attachment (to the act) and appropriation (of it)."³ Then criticizing al-Ash'ari, he says, that according to his formulation of the solution, the human will has no direct efficacy with regard to the act; it is God who produces the act entirely—although he does so after man has willed the act and not before it.⁴ Although al-Ash'ari maintains (in opposition to the predestinarians who say that the attribution of the act to

¹ According to Mu'tazalities, man is the author of his own acts. If man is not the author of his own acts, and if these acts are the creation of God, how can he be held responsible for his acts and deserve punishment for his sins? Thus, all the Mu'tazilites agree in the matter of man's being the creator of his volitional acts. (Sharif, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 200).

² On the question of free-will, the Ash'arites held an intermediary position between the libertarian and fatalistic views, held by the Mu'tazilites and the jabrites respectively. The Ash'arites made a distinction between creation (*khalq*) and Acquisition (*kasb*) of an action. God, according to the Asharites, is the creator *khaliq* of human actions and man is the acquirer (*muktasib*). Power (*Qudrah*), according to them, is either (i) original (*Qadimah*) or (ii) derived (*hadithah*). The original power alone is effective. Derived power can create nothing. The power possessed by man is given by God and as such it is derived. God is, thus, the creator of human actions and man is the acquirer. Man cannot create anything; he cannot initiate work. God creates in man the power and the ability to perform an act. He also creates in him the power to make a free choice (*Ikhtiyar*) between two alternatives—between right and wrong (*Ibid.*, p. 230).

³ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 289; Vol. II, Letter No. 67.

⁴ *Ibid.*

man is metaphorical, not real), that the attribution of the act to the human agent is real, nevertheless, his denial of the efficacy of the human will in the production of the act is really a doctrine of (or qualified) determinism. And that is why it has been justly characterized as “moderate determinism” (*al-jabar a-mutawassit*).¹

Sirhindi then also mentions the views of Abu Ishaq al—Isfra‘ini and Abu Bakr al-Baqillani on the issue. According to the latter, the efficacy of the human will is only with regard to the “description of the act (as distinguished from its production) in as much as it is to be described as obedience or disobedience (to God)”, i.e. the production is God’s, the responsibility is man’s (because of his act of will).² This, says Sirhindi, is unintelligible, for how can man assume complete responsibility without having produced the act?

According to Abu Ishaq (whom Sirhindi cites with approbation), on the other hand, the human action is the product of the collaboration of two powers, the human and the Divine.³ This view, viz., that two contributory causes should produce an effect, is quite legitimate.⁴ Sirhindi maintains that although man’s will is efficacious in the production of the act, the act, by this causal fact alone, does not become a *moral act*.⁵ For this, something else is needed, a moral criterion for

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

judgement. The judgement is something which “follows upon” the act and is rooted in the human situation.”¹

The crux of the whole matter so far is that the efficacy of the human will is beyond doubt and that both man’s volitional efficacy and the efficacy of Divine Power and Decree (*Qada*) collaborate in the actions of man. But to the question, as to what are the terms of this collaboration and how does man come to assume total responsibility for his voluntary actions, Sirhindi’s answer, as follows, is regarded by some scholars “quite new in the history of Muslim ethical thought”.² Explaining the meaning of the Divine Decree Sirhindi says, “ you should know that the *Ahl al-Sunnah* believes in the Divine Decree and Determination and say that all good and evil, sweet and bitter, is by the Divine Determination.”³ For Determination (*Qadr*) means production and bringing into existence and it is obvious that the producer and originator of everything is God, the Glorious— there is no God but He, the creator of everything. He (alone) be worshipped.⁴

“Now, the Mu‘tazilah and Qadariyah have rejected the Divine Determination and Decree and have asserted that the acts of men are due entirely to the power of men.”⁵ They argue that if God ordains evil and then punishes people for it, this would be injustice on His part-Glory be to Him.⁶

¹ *Ibid.*

² Fazlur Rehman, *op. cit.*, P. 70.

³ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 289.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

To Sirhindi, this is sheer ignorance on their part.¹ For the Divine Decree does not take away the power and choice of man: He has decreed that it shall be upto man to choose to act or not to act (in a certain way). In brief, God's decree itself is the cause of human free choice; it has brought about the power of choice in man (*muhaqqiq al-ikhtiyar*) rather than removed it."²

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

CHAPTER IV

SHEIKH AHMAD SIRHINDI : THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT-II

In the previous chapter, Theological Thought-I, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi's concept of God, Universe and Man was discussed. In the present chapter Sirhindi's thought about the Shari'ah, the Prophethood and the Muslim Sects will be discussed.

(a) EXPLICATION OF THE SHARI'AH

Sirhindi's thought, which is basically revivalistic in character, emanates from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and attempts at the revival of the doctrines of Faith and social practices of the community. It aims at curbing the greatest menace of the time by re-asserting the abiding truth of the shari'ah and restoring conviction in the Prophethood of Muhammad(s). As a serious scholar of his time, he explains the truth of the Shari'ah as he belonged to the age, where the trend was to overlook or rather reject the shari'ah over *tariqah*. The former was supposed to

sub-serve the latter, as 'India being the home of *yoga* and asceticism there was no dearth of misguided mystics who had blended mystic practices with philosophical meditation reposing trust in self-mortification, spiritual ecstasy and direct intuition.'¹

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi being a qualified scholar ('alim) of his time was expected to write on the Islamic subjects like the shari'ah etc., but there were other reasons behind the elucidation of the concept of shari'ah by him. At his time, there was a common misunderstanding of the concept (of shari'ah), either due to the ignorance of the '*Ulum al-Qur'an* or due to the wrong experiences or interpretations of sufis. The common views prevalent at that time can be encapsuled as follows:

1. That the shari'ah is essentially a code of law that seeks to regulate external behaviour only. It is concerned with the outer structure of religious life but not with the inner reality;
2. That the shari'ah is for common man only;
3. That captives of reality (*griftaran-i-haqiqat*) attended to reality (*haqiqah*) only, as they thought it out of the purview of the shari'ah;
4. Others sought the synthesis of the shari'ah and *tariqah*.

We may say that some looked at it (shari'ah) from a juristic point of view only and others from a sufi-outlook. Thus responding to the

¹ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

situation and amidst such conflicting views about the shari'ah, Sirhindi in all seriousness elaborates the concept of shari'ah in Islam, which forms an essential part of his revivalist thought.

Sirhindi deals with the concept of shari'ah at two different levels, micro and macro-level. At the micro level he defines the shari'ah in the usual sense of the rules and regulations of the Qur'an and the Sunnah concerning worship and rites, morals and society, economy and government, along with the elaborations and applications of these rules by scholars which agree with the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Here he considers it from the point of view of a traditional jurist and gives his opinion on certain points of law. For instance, in a letter to Abdul Rahim Kani-Khanan, a high official of the Mughal court, he tries to convince the recipient that Islamic law is not difficult but easy to practice.¹ Islam does not impose difficult duties on the believers. For instance, only seventeen daily *rakahs* were prescribed and these can be performed in less than an hour. If a Muslim finds *rukus* and *sajud* to be difficult, he can comply with the law by performing them symbolically.² Only one-fortieth of the property was fixed as *zakat* and even then not all kinds of property are taxable.³ Pilgrimage has only to be performed once in lifetime⁴. God has permitted every man to wed four wives and have an unlimited concubines.⁵ Sirhindi continues in the same vein, while dealing with

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 191.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

matters such as clothing and food and concludes saying, that if anyone finds the shari'ah onerous, despite all this, he doubtlessly suffers from an affliction of the heart (*maraz-i-qalbi*).¹ Discussions of such juridical problems are rare in *Maktubat*.

At the macro level Sirhindi defines and uses the term in wider sense. Along with the rules and laws, the shari'ah also includes faith and belief, values and ideals, as well as Prophet's way to cultivate piety and achieve God's pleasure. Shari'ah in this sense is a comprehensive system of faith and practice, including everything, which God has prescribed (*shara'a*) directly or through the Prophet(s).² Thus to Sirhindi shari'ah is self-sufficient, when he writes, 'it embraces all the realities of this world and the next, leaving nothing out for which one should have to go beyond the shari'ah.'³ Let us elucidate this statement of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, which is pivotal aspect of his thought.

As outlined, the faith (*iman*) is the first part of the shari'ah, which means conviction in transcendental realities—God, Angels, the Hereafter, revelation, prophecy, etc. According to Sirhindi, only way to know these articles of faith is the *wahy* (revelation) of the Prophet.

¹ Ibid

² In the eighteenth verse of *Surah al-Jathiya* (45th) of the Qur'an, the term shari'ah is used in its wider sense. Abdullah Yousuf 'Ali, commenting on the verse, writes that, 'Shari'ah is best translated the "right way of Religion", which is wider than the mere formal rites and legal provisions (p. 1536).

³ Sirhindi *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 36.

Neither reason nor mystic *kashf*¹ is capable of revealing them. Reason on its own cannot ascertain these realities. Sirhindi writes, 'Everything that we know through the prophets regarding God's existence and attributes, prophets and revelation, the impeccability of angels, resurrection, Paradise and Hell, Eternal happiness and damnation, and other similar truths which the shari'ah has revealed to us, are impossible to know through reason. Before hearing from the prophets, reason is incapable of establishing them by itself'.² Here his views regarding the shortcomings of the reason are not different from some of the important thinkers like Ghazzali. However, on the position of mystic *kashf*, Sirhindi has a different view.

To Sirhindi, *kashf* is not an independent source of knowledge parallel to *wahy*. It can only act as an interpreter of the prophetic revelation concerning matters of faith. He says, 'inspiration (*ilham*) only brings out the non-apparent truths of religion; it is not to add upon its truths. As *ijtihad* reveals rules that are implied (in the shari'ah), similarly, *ilham*, reveals the hidden truths (of faith) which ordinary people are not able to see.'³ Sirhindi then says, even in this capacity of interpreter, *kashf* is not infallible; like the *ijtihad* of a *mujtahid* the *kashf* of a sufi may be right or wrong. Inspiration is uncertain (*Zanni*) and the revelations of *kashf* do not generate truth.⁴

¹ *Kashf* literally means to reveal or uncover. It is the knowledge acquired through mystical means, e.g., vision, audition, dream, inspiration, insight, etc.

² Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. III, Letter No. 23.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 55.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 209 and 266.

Explaining his ideas on *kashf* Sirhindi goes on to say that the opinion of the theologians of *Ahl al-Sunnah* is the measuring rod of ascertaining the validity of the ideas of a mystic in the light of his *kashf*. In case the mystical ideas are contradictory, they should be treated as the product of *sukr* (intoxication) of the mystic and rejected as false. He writes, 'there are mystical ideas which conflict with the views of the *Ahl-i-Haqq* (i.e., theologians of *Ahl al-Sunnah*), in such cases the truth is with the 'ulama' of the *Ahl-i-Haqq*'.¹ At another place he writes, 'the criterion of the validity of mystical ideas (*'Ulum ladunniyah*) is that they should agree with the clear ideas of the disciplines (*'Ulum*) of the shari'ah; if there is a hair's breadth of divergence, it is due to *sukr*. The truth is what the 'ulama of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* have established. All else is *zandaqah* (blasphemy), *ilhad* (heresy) and the result of *sukr* (intoxication) and *ghalbat al-hal* (ecstasy).² To sum up, we can say that the *kashf* of sufi should pass the test of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and their interpretation by theological reason.³

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 112,

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 31.

³ When the views of Sirhindi on *kashf* are compared with those of Imam Ghazzali, they are quite different. According to al-Ghazzali, *wahy* (Prophetic revelation) is ambiguous about metaphysical realities of faith, and uses the language of symbols and metaphors. To know its real meaning, one has to interpret this language, and to do that theological reason is quite incapable. (Al-Ghazzali, *Ihya'Ulum al-Din*, Vol. I. Cario, 1939, pp.10-11). Hence for al-Ghazzali *kashf* is the most reliable instrument of interpretation. It is not at all subject to theological reason. On the contrary theology has to submit to mystical revelations. (Al-Ghazali, *al-Munqidah min al-Dalal*, ed., Dr. Ab. Hamid Mahmud, Cario, 1964, p. 13). In his writings al-Ghazzali plays down the theological reason and extols *kashf*. (Muhammad 'Abdul Haq Ansari, 'The Doctrine of Divine Command: A Study in the Development of Ghazzali's view of Reality', *Islamic Studies*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, 1982, pp. 22-24). Ibn al-'Arabi in comparison to al-Ghazali gives reason a greater role but puts *kashf* at a higher position. Contd. on p. 129.....

According to Sirhindi, shari'ah not only means belief in transcendental realities but also defines what religious life truly is (*haqiqah*), what are its constituents and what they really mean. Shari'ah is not just a code of rules and regulations that govern external action. It also explains what faith, *Tawhid*, trust, gratitude, patience, worship, *dhikr*, *jihad*, *taqwa*, and *ihsan* are, and shows how to realize these realities. It is concerned with outer behaviour as well as with internal state of mind and will; with faith and virtue, motive and intention, feelings and emotions. Thus shari'ah is a complete unity of *surah* (form) and *haqiqah* (essence or reality).¹ In other words it has an outward (*zahir*) and an inner aspect (*batin*).² The outward form of the shari'ah involves compliance with the clear Qur'anic commandments (*Muhkamat*) and the inward or essence of the Shari'ah (*haqiqat-i-shari'ah*) can be arrived at by properly understanding the ambiguous verses of the Qur'an (*mutashabihat*).³

The sufi *tariqah*, on the other hand, is only a means to achieve the realities of religious life and confirms without any addition, to what the shari'ah says.⁴ There are no realities outside the shari'ah and the

.....Contd. from p: 128.

Baha' al-Din Naqashbandi's view is similar to that of Sirhindi. When the former was asked, 'what is the purpose of *suluk*? He replied: 'The purpose is to know in brief, and to perceive in vision what you know through arguments.' (Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 84). Commenting on these words, Sirhindi says, 'The shaykh did not say that the purpose is to acquire truths beyond the truths of the shar'. Shihab al-Suhrawardi (d. 1234) is of the same view (see his book '*Awarif al-Ma'arif*').

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol., I, Letter No. 276.

² *Ibid.*

³ Al-Qur'an, III/7.

⁴ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 36.

sufi *tariqah* is only a further help to attain those realities. And *tariqah* is always subservient to the shari'ah.¹

In Sirhindi's view it is 'heresy and infidelity'² to consider that the shari'ah is to be followed only till the *ma'arifah*³ is achieved. There was a group of sufis (though small) who believed that the shari'ah is for common man who does not know or cannot know the truth (*ma'arifah*); but those who have known the truth do not need it any longer. But to Sirhindi, the truth is just opposite.⁴ Sirhindi also holds that the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet, the Ijtihad and *Ijma'* (consensus of opinion of the jurists) are the only means to determine what things are *halal* (legal) or *haram* (illegal) and what acts are right or wrong. They also specify the degree of obligation, i. e., whether a thing is *wajib* (obligatory) or *haram* (forbidden), *mandub* (commendable), *makruh* (undesirable), or *mubah* (permissible). He writes, 'it is commonly agreed that in determining the *ahkam* (rules) of the shari'ah, what counts is the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet, the *qiyas* of the qualified jurist (*mujtahid*) and the Consensus of the *Ummah*. No other principle apart from these four is to be taken into consideration to determine the legality of rules'.⁵ Sirhindi also believes that the *ilham* (inspiration) or the *kashf* of the sufi has no role in determining the legality of things or fixing the

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 261.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 276.

³ *Ma'arifah* means knowledge. In tasawwuf it is particularly that knowledge which is acquired through mystical means, gnosis.

⁴ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I., Letter No. 276.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 55.

degree of their obligation. He writes, “*ilham* (inspiration) does not determine whether something is right or wrong, and the *kashf* of a sufi does not establish the degree of a rule, whether it is obligatory or desirable.”¹ He clearly gives superior position to the jurists against sufis and treats the later at par with the common men. He again writes, “the *awliya*’ (saints) have to follow, like an ordinary Muslim, the opinion of *mujtahids*. Their *Kushuf* (revelations) and *ilhamat* (inspirations) do not elevate their status and relieve them from following the judgments of the *fuqaha* (jurists). Dhu al-Nun, al-Bistami, Junayd and al-Shibli are just like ordinary men, Zayd, ‘Umar, Bakr and Khalid. They have to follow the judgments of the *mujtahidin* (jurists) in matters of *ijtihad*’.²

Besides, Sirhindi also believes that the shari‘ah deals with the matters like what is the ideal life or ultimate goal of man. He is of the view that the shari‘ah has its own system of values and priorities, which can only be revealed by contemplating over its structure, not by *kashf* or philosophical speculation.

Three Components of Shari‘ah

Shari‘ah, according to Sirhindi comprises of three parts: ‘*ilm* (Knowledge), ‘*aml* (action) and *ikhlas* (sincerity). For the complete obedience of shari‘ah, all the three parts have to be accomplished. He writes, ‘The shari‘ah has three parts-knowledge, action and sincerity of

¹ *Ibid.* Ibn al-‘Arabi’s view on the shari‘ah is essentially same. He says, “ the shari‘ah has been fixed and what is incumbent (*fard*) or obligatory (*wajib*), desirable (*mandub*), permissible (*mubah*) or undesirable (*makruh*) has been defined.”

² Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 55.

motive; unless you fulfill the demands of all these parts, you do not obey the shari'ah. The *tariqah* and *haqiqah* for which the sufis are known, are subservient to the shari'ah, as they help to realize its third part, namely sincerity. Hence they are sought in order to fulfill the shari'ah, not to achieve something beyond the shari'ah. The purpose of traversing the stages of *tariqah* and *haqiqah* is nothing other than the realization of *ikhlas*, which involves the attainment of *rida* (satisfaction). Only one out of thousand sufis is graced with the three illuminations (*tajalliyat sih ganah*) and gnostic vision, given *ikhlas* and elevated to the stage of *rida*'.¹

Shari'ah Superior to *Tariqah*

In Sirhindi's view *Sunnah* and shari'ah are the most important components of Islamic culture.² On the day of Resurrection, says Sirhindi, people will be questioned about their adherence to the shari'ah, not about *tasawwuf*.³ He urges his disciples to read books on fiqh and affirms that sufi experience is inferior to the shari'ah and not vice-versa, because shari'ah is based on incontrovertible proof, while sufi experience is result of fallible speculation only.⁴ One of his disciples recalls that when he was overwhelmed by *hal*, Sirhindi used to tell him, "Go study your lesson, because an ignorant sufi is fool of satan". Any sufi experience that is rejected by shari'ah is heresy⁵, says Sirhindi, and the

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I. Letter No. 36.

² Friedmann, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

³ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 48.

⁴ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 37

⁵ *Ibid.*

Maktubat contains countless exhortations to follow the Sunnah and comply with the shari'ah.

Shari'ah, he regarded as all comprehensive, embracing all the realities of this world and the next, and the possibilities of true mystical experience. Shari'ah has two appearances, an external and a real one. The external appearance is based on whatever is unambiguously enjoined in the Qur'an and the Sunnah; it is the sphere of knowledge of the formal 'ulama ('*Ulama-i-Zawahir*).¹ Whatever has been left ambiguous and unexplained in the Qur'an and in Sunnah is the sphere of the speculation of the profound ('*Ulama-i-Rasikhin*). These 'ulama who follow the lead of the Prophet(s) are superior to the saints, as prophethood is superior to sainthood.² Thus to Sirhindi, the observance of single religious commandment is more profitable for emancipation from sensual desires than 'a thousand years' of self-imposed penance or spiritual concentration and from this point of view all the exercises of a Hindu *yoge* are an absolute waste.³

Sirhindi's Approach Towards *Bid'ah* (Innovation)

Sirhindi's approach to the issue of innovation is also relevant to the description of his views on the Islamic law. He generally exhorts to follow Sunnah and avoid *Bidah*. He unlike a jurist, rarely speaks of innovations which are peculiar to Muslims of India as a result of

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I. Letter No. 276.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 55.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 52.

their life in the midst of the Hindu people. He deals with the problem on theoretical level.

In several places in the *Maktubat* he launches vigorous attack against the distinction between *bid'ah hasanah* (good innovations) and *bid'ah sayyi'ah* (bad innovations), asserting that either of them is certain to do away with a Sunnah and should, therefore, be scrupulously avoided.¹ He cites examples. It has been said, for instance, that the use of the turban as a part of the shroud is a good innovation. It is clear, however, that this contravenes the Sunnah by using an additional piece of cloth beyond the three prescribed ones.² To place the turban-sash on the left side has also been considered good innovation, though it is evidently inconsistent with the Sunnah, which demands that the sash be allowed to hung between the shoulders.³ The opinion of those 'ulama who maintain that it is laudable to express the prayer-initiation (*niyat-i-nimaz*) aloud, though the Prophet and his Companions never did it in this manner, is also unacceptable. In case this recommendation is followed, most people are satisfied with the words and are not concerned with the intention of the heart (*irada-yi-qalb*); a Sunnah is thus abrogated.⁴ Therefore, all innovations are bad and ought to be shunned. The Qur'an says: 'Today I have perfected your religion for you and bestowed upon you all my

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol., I, Letter No. 186.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

favour, and I have approved Islam as your religion". Islam is thus perfect and does not require any modification or addition.

To conclude we may say that for Sirhindi shari'ah is all comprehensive, encompassing minutest detail of this world and the next. Shari'ah and *tariqah* are, on the one hand, two expressions of the same reality;¹ on the other hand, *tariqah* is the servant of the shari'ah whose service is essential to making the shari'ah complete.² The relationship between shari'ah and *tariqah* is parallel to that between prophecy and sainthood: shari'ah is superior to *tariqah* in the same way that prophecy is superior to sainthood.³ Sirhindi thus speaks of *al-fana fi al-Shari'ah*.

(b) RE-ASSERTION OF THE PROPHETHOOD

There is no disagreement among the Muslim scholars about Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, being 'the Renovator of the Second Millennium' (Mujaddid alf-Thani). But there is difference of opinion as to what was the single greatest achievement among a series of his brilliant revivalistic accomplishments. The differences fall into three categories, which can be summarized as follows.

The first category of scholars highlight that the emphasis of Sirhindi in advocating the superiority of shari'ah over *tariqah*, is the central point of his wide ranging revivalistic endeavour, and therefore, he deserves to be called the *Mujaddid Alf-i-Thani*. No one before him had

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I. Letter No. 36.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 95 and 108; Vol. II, Letter No. 46.

laid stress on the issue in such a forceful, confident and authoritative manner as was done by Sirhindi. He outrightly made it clear that the *tariqah* was meant sub-serve the shari'ah and this checked the tendency to overlook or reject the shari'ah.¹

To the second category of scholars, Sirhindi's sturdy attack on the popular mystic philosophy of *wahdat al-wujud* was his main revivalistic effort.² He unlike traditional 'ulama' not only criticized the doctrine but also gave an alternative philosophy of *wahdat al-shuhud*, which is thought to be more close to the conception of *Tawhid*. In their view nobody had launched out so forcefully against that misguided doctrine of sufism before him. He succeeded in stemming it so effectively that nobody raised his voice in its favour in the succeeding generations.

According to the third group of scholars, Sirhindi regained India for Islam, which was about to slip into the hands of religious eclecticism, which was flourishing under the patronage of Akbar.³ They believe that Sirhindi saved Indian Muslims from immediate danger of comprehensive religious, intellectual and cultural*apostasy, which had been made virtually unavoidable by Akbar's passionate drive and iron will and the intelligence of his sharp-witted advisers like Mulla Mubarak, Faizi and Abul Fazl. Thus he guarded the *Millat* in India from such unwarranted developments.⁴

¹ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴ *Ibid.*

But, according to a modern and acclaimed scholar of the contemporary Muslim world, Syed Nadwi, Sirhindi's main achievement as the Mujaddid was his re-emphasising the need and importance of the Prophethood (*Nabuwah*). The essence of his message was to 'back away from everyone and attend only to your master (Muhammad)'. After examining the other achievements of Sirhindi, he writes, "but the fact that the greatest achievement of the Mujaddid which is the nucleus of his entire endeavour or the focal point of his multi-dimensional reformatory programme was his success in creating a trust in the need and abiding nature of Muhammad's prophethood."¹ His was really the call, "Back to Muhammad",² the focal point of his reformatory activities. It was this principle of reform and renovation, which struck at the root of perversion threatening to subvert the religious, spiritual and intellectual basis of the Muslim society.

Thus prompted by the need of the hour, Sirhindi took up the responsibility of the re-assertion of the principle of Prophethood, and elucidated its theoretical importance and practical relevance. It was the task never taken before him by any one, perhaps, as the need was not felt by the scholars and reformers of the preceding generations. But, Sirhindi was compelled by the circumstances to respond to the distortions spread consciously or unconsciously about the institution of Prophethood.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

² Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

The institution of Prophethood was under scrutiny as a group of men propagated the philosophy that the religion of Prophet(s) has completed the term of one thousand years, and therefore needs to be replaced. The followers of these distorted ideas were known as 'Naqtawis'¹ and their ideology as 'ideology of second millennium' (*Nazriya Alf Thani*).²

The Naqtawis claimed that the new millennium needs a fresh ideology, which was furnished by Mahmud Basikhawni, the founder of the Naqtawi movement. They contested the Prophethood of Muhammad(s) by claiming that the new age required a fresh principle of human action based on reason and philosophy. *Din-i-Illahi* of Akbar can be treated as an outcome of such ideas. Under such influences Akbar introduced 'Alfi coins' in his domain.³ Hijrah calendar was replaced by 'Alfi Calendar'.⁴ The repercussions of Akbar's 'new order' and his claims of mujtahid did not ceased here. Purely religious devotions and rituals like *Salat*, *Saum*, *Haj* were influenced by the un-islamic practices. Usury, gambling and drinking became lawful. The worship of sun became prevalent.⁵ In short, an inevitable outcome of Akbar's religious policy was that the monotheistic way of life and system of belief which had taken four hundred years' labour of the most virtuous and spiritually illuminated

¹ The Naqtawi movement has been discussed in detail in Chapter I, p.24-25.

² Maulana Manzoor Nu'mani, *Tazkirah Mujaddid Alf Thani*, Lucknow, 1986, p.44.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵ For detail see Chapter I, pp.39-40. For more details of impact of Akbar's religious policy, also see, Nu'mani, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-102.

persons to take root in the country, were laid open to a comprehensive danger of religious, intellectual and cultural apostasy.

The institution of Prophethood was also being challenged by the followers of Imamiyah sect. They believed in the divine and indefeasible right of the *Imam* to lead the Muslims, and venerated them as divinely appointed leaders in the same way as the prophets of God. The author of the *Kita Tarikh al-Mazhib al-Islamiyah* (Vol.I), Abu Zahra,¹ writes that all the scholars of Imamiyah sect are agreed on the equality of an imam and a prophet. Under the extending influence of the sect, the Muslim society of India was gradually accepting the thought and customs of the Imamiyah creed. Then, in the continuation of these false pretensions, the mystic theory of *wahdat al-wujud*, consciously or unconsciously tried to assert itself as a doctrine antagonistic to the concept of Prophethood and revealed guidance. The more it took root in the Muslim society, the more Muslim community lost its conviction in the infallibility of Islam as the only saving principle. All these developments were posing a challenge to the Prophethood of the Muhammad(s) and the way of life taught by him.

To counteract this trend, Sirhindi wrote his first book,² *Athbat-i-Nabuwah* (*Defence of Prophecy*), wherein he elucidated the essence of the Prophethood in Islam. In the introduction of the book he mentions the factors that prompted him to write the monumental work. He

¹ Quoted by Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

² Written in 1582-83.

writes, I found the people of my age wanting in faith about the real concept of Prophethood, antipathy being shown towards the prophet's names, and the persons bearing the prophet's name were even changed.¹ He further writes, having interacted with scholars well-versed with Greek philosophy and claiming scholarship having read the science of infidels, I found them misleading the people and having themselves gone astray about the very concept of Prophethood.² They went to the extent of saying that the Prophethood is concerned with the external aspects of man only, and has nothing to do with the Salvation in the next world.³ Having observed all this, I found myself obliged to write in 'Defense of Prophethood'.

The Institution of Prophethood

In order to explain out the importance and to re-assert the trust in the Prophethood, Sirhindi starts on the note that the knowledge gained through intellectual process as well as spiritual intuition is imperfect. Their incompetence lies in the fact that they cannot penetrate the metaphysical truths, such as, the gnosis of God, His attributes, the ultimate truth and reality of existence, etc.⁴ He says that the knowledge gained through either of these sources was neither beyond doubt nor free from mistake. In regard to intellect he writes that, it ought to be kept in

¹ Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Athbat-i-Nabuwat*, tr., Gh. Mustafa Khan, Karachi, 1963, pp. 50-51.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. III, Letter No. 23.

mind that it is not self-sufficient to perform its functions of knowing, analysing and reasoning, since it has to depend on other subordinate faculties i.e., sensory organs, which by themselves are insufficient to supply the information to the intellect, and operate within a limited compass.¹ The true knowledge of God could be had through revelation vouchsafed to the prophets, for it occupies a higher place in comparison to intellect in the same way as intellect was superior to sensory perceptions.² Thus the knowledge of God and the correct way of divine worship could be known from the prophets alone.³

According to Sirhindi, the ancient Greek philosophers had committed greivous mistake in understanding the true nature and attributes of God. This was because there was nothing like pure or abstract intellect nor there existed any pure and unmixed spiritual intuition or ecstatic inspiration, free from all intrinsic and extrinsic influences.⁴ The mystics and theosophists had also blundered, explains Sirhindi, like the philosophers, because they failed to recognize that intellect and theosophy⁵ were both equally incompetent to get at the knowledge pertaining to God.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Theosophy is a method of attaining the knowledge of God. Its guiding principle is that intellect, learning and reasoning faculties block the way instead of opening the door to the discovery of ultimate truth. It considers the vision of ultimate reality necessary for attaining the knowledge, and this can be had through self-purification, illumination of the spirit and developing an inner sense which can perceive the spiritual realities and metaphysical truths in the same way as eyes can see material objects. This sense is developed, according to them, when the earthy nature of man and his outer faculties or sense are completely suppressed and subdued.

The metaphysical questions are outside the reach of mysticism just as philosophy cannot be expected to solve them.¹ Theosophy or illuminism affords a glimpse of the spiritual world but leave many questions unanswered as, what is the Will and Pleasure of God, the divine law etc. The fact of the matter is that philosophy and theosophy are cast in the same mould: the spirit underlying both of them is one and the same. Both want to attain the ultimate reality without the agency of Prophethood. The distinction of both is same: one wants to reach it with the wing of its imagination while the other desires to get at it through a spiritual tunnel of inner faculties but both fail to reach the Truth.² This meant that the Prophethood remains as the only trust-worthy medium of obtaining knowledge about God and His attributes and commandments.

Prophethood Transcends Intellect

Prophethood transcends intellect and the methods of reasoning.³ Matters, which are beyond the ken of intellect or human perception, are proved by the prophetic method. Had human intellect been sufficient to show light of guidance to man, there would have been no need for God to send His apostles, nor the chastisement in the hereafter would have been prescribed as punishment for rejecting them.⁴ Reason furnishes a proof, no doubt, but its testimony is neither final nor perfect.

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktrubat*, Vol. III, Letter No. 23.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 36; Vol. I, Letter No. 266.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Authenticated attestation is provided only by Prophethood after which there remains nothing more to be searched for.¹

Prophetic teachings are not verifiable by intellect. In fact the prophetic procedure is beyond intellect and irrationality.² The line of action adopted by intellect cannot approach the Divine Person without following the lead of the prophets. To be against the reason or intellect is something quite different from that which cannot be comprised by the intellect. Irrationality of any thought can be judged only after the intellect has comprehended its nature.³

Prophethood Indispensable

Prophets are indispensable for guidance of humanity, asserts Sirhindi. The *Tasfiya* (purification) and *Tazkiya* (embellishment) of soul which depend on the divinely approved virtuous deeds are unattainable without the help of the prophets⁴. Human intellect is, in his view, inadequate to lead man to the divine presence. He writes, 'apostleship is a blessing for mankind; for, without their assistance who could have enlightened it about the nature and attributes of God and made it to see the difference between the evil and the virtue.'⁵ It is Prophethood which drew a line of demarcation between the truth and

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I., Letter No. 266.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

untruth and distinguished between what was fit to be paid divine reverence and what was unfit for it.¹

Gnosis of God (*Ma'rifat*) is a gift of Prophethood, according to Sirhindi. As the call and message of the prophets came to be known to the world through their continued preaching, even the most ignoramus doubting the existence of the Creator realized their mistake and found credence. Their acceptance of God as the Creator of all things and beings was brought about by the light and knowledge spread by God's messengers.²

Prophets Teach Methods of Worship

The prophets also provide guidance in the matter of thanksgiving to the Great Benefactor and teach man how to pay homage to Him in the way He desires.³ Divine service not performed in accordance with the direction given by Him is unbecoming of His great Majesty and Power but the faculties endowed to man are incapable of finding out its correct method. As man can even commit the mistake of being disrespectful in place of returning Him thanks, it becomes the duty of the prophets to let man know how to lift up his heart in adoration of God. The inspirations of the saintly persons are also drawn from the prophets on whose imitation depends all the blessings and divine grace dispensed to thanks.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 23.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

Prophethood Superior to Intellect

Prophethood is superior to intellect, concludes Sirhindi. Intellect occupies a position higher to senses because it can comprehend things not perceived by the senses. In a similar manner Prophethood is superior in position and quality to the intellect since it can discern things not apprehended by the latter.¹

Prophethood and Sainthood

The prophet in his faith and knowledge, virtue and piety, experience and attainment, marks the ultimate perfection of man, and sets the highest example to be followed. He is the criterion on which the *wali* and *walayāt* is to be judged. There are *walis* who are occupied exclusively with God and are lost in Him, and care little for themselves or for others. They are inferior to those who attend to the duties towards God as well as the duties towards men.² The distinction of prophet's 'contact with God' and his 'contact with people' is that they are not two different phases of his life, one coming after the other, as the *sufi* does. They are rather two moments of his life. For he does not undergo experience of *fana*³ and *baqa*⁴ as the *sufi* does. He does not experience self-annihilation or self-dissolution union or merger into God. He never feels ecstasy and

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No.22; Vol. II, Letter No. 93.

³ *Fana* means to die or disappear. It is the mystical experience of losing the self in God.

⁴ *Baqa* means to survive or abide. It is the mystical experience of subsistence or living by and in God after dying (*fana*) to oneself.

intoxication, does not lose control over his reason, or indulge in *shath*.¹ He has no unification or no separation, no ascent or no descent. He is never so absorbed in God as to lose sight of himself and the world, and never so occupied with the world as to forget God. 'In prophecy', says Sirhindi, 'the prophet does not face the creation only, he faces God along with facing the world'.²

The experience of a prophet and the *wali* are, thus, different, however, they share a lot of experience with each other. The *wali* sees dreams (*ru'ya*) and vision (*waqi'at*), receives ideas directly in the heart (*ilham*), hears voices, and talks to appearances. These extraordinary forms of revelation, which together are called *kashf*, are common between the *wali* and the prophet.

However, two things distinguish the revelation of the prophet from the revelation of *wali*. One, the prophet has a particular form of revelation, namely, revelation through an angel called *wahy*; the *wali* does not have it. *Wahy* in this sense is specific to the prophet, and is the real basis of prophecy. Second, all the revelations of the prophet, whether *wahy* in the special sense, or in the form of a dream, vision, audition and inspiration are true and certain, but the revelations of the *wali* are fallible and uncertain.³ The third difference, which is actually a corollary of the second, is that, the revelation of the prophet is binding on people, whereas

¹ Ecstatic utterances of the sufis.

² Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I. Letter No. 95.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 41 and 112.

the *kashf* of a *wali* is not. *Kashf* is not an independent and sufficient argument, it needs to be confirmed by the prophetic revelation.¹

The two moments of prophet's life viz., contact with God—his reception of *wahy*, his perception of Divine rule, angels, his *dhikr* and contemplation, his turning to God for mercy and assistance, his thanksgiving and submission etc., and contact with people—his recitation of *wahy*, his preaching and mission, his instruction to his followers in self-purification and piety, his struggle against his opponents, etc., form one whole, intertwined with one another. The Companions and their successors never made any distinction between them and never raised the question, which aspect was higher and which was lower. But such distinction was made only when sufism came into being and consequently the life of poverty and renunciation, *dhikr* and meditation, *fana'* and *baqa'*, *kasf* and illumination came to be applauded as the highest and most sublime life. The first aspect of the Prophet's life was called his *walayāt*, and was extolled over the second aspect which was called *nubawat* and *risalat*, and therefore, some people held that the *wali* is superior to the prophet.

But Sirhindi contests the whole thought and asserts that the *nabi* is superior to *wali*, and even his *nubuwa*t is superior to his *walayāt*.² He defends his argument by saying that, it is not true, first of all, that in

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I., Letter No. 48; Vol. III. Letter No. 91.

² Although the *ummah* and the sufis in general have always held that the prophet is incoorably superior to the *wali*, but when comparing *walayāt* of a *nabi* with his *nubawat*, many a sufi have extolled the former over latter.

nubawat the prophet's attention is turned away from God and centered on people. The prophet does not experience an opposition between 'attention to God' and 'attention to people'. That opposition, rather conflict, is part of a *wali's* life; he experiences it particularly in the first stage of his *suluk*¹. The prophet does not follow the sufi *tariqah*, consequently he does not experience the conflict. His attention to the people, therefore, does not imply distraction from God, nor does his occupation with God mean disconcern with people.² Secondly, in attending to the people, the prophet in fact attends to God, because he does not attend to them of his own will. He attends because God commands him to attend. Therefore, when he attends to them he attends to God.³ Finally, to attend to people on the command of God in order that they believe in Him, obey Him and come close to Him, is a hundred times better than to occupy oneself with God and concentrate on Him. This life should better be devoted to carrying out His will and bring the people near to Him, argues Sirhindi.⁴

Sirhindi, thus, gives a wider view of prophet's mission. He starts his mission with the preaching of the shari'ah, which includes both his religion and laws. The believers, who accept his religion, are taught how to act upon his teachings by the prophet. He shows them how to worship God and remember Him, how to avoid sin and purify oneself, how to cultivate virtues and piety, and how to feel for humanity and work

¹ Traveling the sufi path.

² Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I., Letter No. 108.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 46.

⁴ *Ibid.*

for their happiness. He tells them that the purpose of man's life is to serve God, and show them how to attain God's pleasure. He preaches religion as well as demonstrates how to practise and live it.

The struggle to build a new society and create a new world for his followers, is also a component of prophetic mission, says Sirhindi. He tries to demolish the old society and fights to establish the rule of God on earth. Sirhindi does not discuss this aspect at length, but he leaves none in doubt that for him it is an integral part of prophet's mission. He refers to it in letters which he wrote to men in power,¹ where he underscores the role of the ruler in Islam, his responsibility to implement the laws of shari'ah, to establish its institutions and to defend them against attacks from within and from without. Thus, Sirhindi gives the broader view of the institution of Prophethood in Islam.

Maqam (Station) of Prophethood

To conclude, we can say that the view that Sirhindi tries to demonstrate is that the Prophets were intellectually and spiritually the acme of perfection, among the entire creation of the God.² He explains that their spiritual affinity with God was never severed by their diversion of attention to any matter whatsoever because their responsive hearts were opened by God to the secrets of truth and reality. This was a characteristic singular to them since the great task with which they were charged

¹ For instance, in a letter addressed to the governor of a province he writes: "If along with your administrative work, you could implement the shari'ah, you would be doing the work of prophets". (*Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 54.)

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 95.

required brilliance and alertness of mind along with large heartedness and fortitude not possessed by the illuminists and ecstasies. The prophet of God made the start where mystics and saints ended their journey of spirit.¹ The former enjoyed nearness of God by virtue of the performance of duties allotted to them whereas the latter strived to approach it through voluntary devotions and prayers but could never attain that stage.² The perfection of sainthood as compared to the quintessence of Prophethood was like a drop beside the ocean.³ Sainthood is a fraction of what Prophethood represents as a whole. The Prophethood is thus superior to sainthood.

(c) REVIEW OF THE MUSLIM SECTS

In the letter 80 of the first volume of the *Maktubat*, Sirhindi writes that among the seventy three groups⁴ of Muslims, the righteous is that of *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'a*.⁵ He defends himself by quoting a hadith of Prophet(s) that, 'among the groups only that will achieve Salvation (*najat*) who will obey me and my Companions (*Ashab*).⁶ As obedience of Prophet(s) is obligatory for obedience of Allah,⁷ argues Sirhindi, so is obedience of Companions of prophet(s) compulsory, for the

¹ *Ibid.* Vol. I, Letter No. 266.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The reference here is to the well-known hadith wherein Prophet(s) has predicted of division of *Ummah* in seventy-three groups, in the age of its downfall.

⁵ Also see Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 67

⁶ الذين هم على ما أنا عليه وأصحابي

⁷ Al-Qur'an, IV/80. من يطيع الرسول فقد اطاع الله

obedience of Prophet(s). Since, only *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'a* fulfill this condition, therefore they are the righteous group. The other groups like Khawarajites, accuse the *Sahaba* as slanderers, which tantamounts to the accusing the Prophet(s) of the same, therefore, they have gone astray. There are isolated references to such groups in the writings of Sirhindi.¹ But, the only Muslim sect that Sirhindi discusses in detail is *ahl al-Tashi'a (Rawafiz)*.

Sirhindi's Account of Shi'as

The Shi'ah is the only Muslim sect to which Sirhindi pays full attention in his works, because there were enough factors for him to do that. A campaign of vilification against the Companions of Prophet(s) had been launched by the Shi'as throughout India with renewed vigour.² The campaign was particularly against the *Khulafa'-i-Thalatha* for depriving Hadhrat 'Ali, as they claimed, of the right to succeed the Prophet(s); and against 'Aiysha, Talha, Zubayr and Mu'awiyah who opposed and fought 'Ali afterwards.³ Except 'Ali's family and his supporters, the entire community of Companions ultimately came under their condemnation. The Shi'a scholars at Agra court published a book, refuting the criticism leveled against them by the sunni scholars of Central Asia (*Mawara al-Nahr*) and vindicating their position.⁴ In reply to the

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 80.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 36; Nu'mani, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

³ *Ibid.*(Numani), p. 181.

⁴ Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 243.

issues raised by Shi'a scholars in the book, Sirhindi wrote *Radd-i-Rawafiz*¹ (Refutation of the Shi'as).² The importance of the book can be gauged from the fact that the scholar of the caliber of Shah Wali-Ullah Dahlawi later wrote a commentary on it.³

In the beginning of *Radd* Sirhindi explains that his decision to write the refutation of the Shi'a doctrines was prompted by the Prophetic tradition demanding that 'the learned refute heretical ideas whenever they appear'.⁴ He decided to fulfill this duty when he observed that 'some of the followers of shi'a, who frequented these regions, boasted and were proud of these fundamental principles (of the Shi'a faith) and spread these fallacies in the councils of the princes and the kings'.⁵

In the *Radd* and *Maktubat*, Sirhindi maintains and substantiates the stance of *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'a*, about the Shi'as. After describing the Shi'a *takfir* of the Companions of the Prophet(s), Sirhindi then launches an attack upon the doctrines of the shi'a.⁶ He argues that it is not true that the Prophet(s) nominated 'Ali to succeed him

¹ The epistle was written in 1592 A.D. Maulana Sher Muhammad Khan published it in 1871 from Delhi, with the title *Radd-i-Rawafiz Raddiya*. But in 1877 Nawal Kishore deleted *Raddiya* from the title (Abul Fazl Faruqi, *Al-Majmu'tu al-Saniyah*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 7-8)

² Friedmann, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

³ Nu'mani, *op. cit.*, p. 181

⁴ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 252.

⁵ Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Radd-i-Rawafiz*, Delhi, 1983, p. 10; Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 243.

⁶ *Ibid.*, (Sirhindi), p. 11.

and the so-called *ahadith* telling of his nomination are forged.¹ Their adoration of ‘Ali is similar in its excesses to the Christian attitude towards Jesus.² It is against the known practice of the first three Caliphs to violate the Prophet’s decree, as it is against the dignity of ‘Ali to subject himself to their authority and falsify thereby his claim, if the Prophet(s) had nominated him.³ He maintains that there is consensus of opinion among the *Sahaba* and *Tab‘ieen* of the superiority of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman over Hadhrat ‘Ali.⁴ The Shi‘a books are unreliable and must be considered to be as corrupted (*muharrafah*) as the Torah and the Injil.⁵ The Shi‘as do not refrain from adding spurious passages to the Qur‘an while accusing ‘Uthman of concealing Qur‘anic verses, which had allegedly been revealed in praise of the Prophet’s family.⁶ According to Sirhindi, a serious affect of accepting the Shi‘a position about the Companions is that it puts in doubt the credibility of the Qur‘an, which they (Companions) have collected.⁷ It also undermines the authenticity of the whole corpus of Hadith, which they have transmitted.⁸ It will also discredit the mission of the Prophet(s) who spent his whole life educating men, and on their turn after his demise, *en masse* violated his instructions.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 67, 15 and 36.

⁵ Sirhindi, *Radd*, p. 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 251; Vol. II, Letter No. 96.

⁸ Sirhindi, *Radd*, p. 17.

In the disputes between ‘Ali and his opponents, Sirhindi clearly states that the truth was with ‘Ali and his opponents were wrong.¹ But the wrong stand taken by ‘Ali’s opponents was a result of an error in judgment made in good faith and cannot, therefore, be reason for their exclusion from the Muslim Community.² Hence the opponents like ‘A’ishah, Talha and Zubair are not to be condemned but to be excused.³ About Amir Mu‘awiyah who among the Companions is most vilified by the Shi‘as, Sirhindi maintains that though being wrong, cannot be deemed as *Kafir* or *Fasiq* (as Shi‘as believe)⁴. If it is accepted, then it is also to be shared by about half of the Companions who supported Mu‘awwiyah and consequently half of the religious corpus transmitted through them will become doubtful.⁵ Sirhindi also rejects the Shi‘a view that the Companionship of Prophet (*Suhbat-i-Rasool*) is not of great importance. He says that the Companionship of Prophet(s) is superior than any other virtue or merit.⁶ And for that reason likes of Ovais Qarni and ‘Umr bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz, who though match the Companions in their virtues, are inferior to them on account of latter’s association with the Prophet(s).⁷ And for the similar reason errors in judgment (*Khata-i-Ijtihadi*) committed

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 251 and 36.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 36.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I., Letter No. 251.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 36.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. I. Letter No. 120.

⁷ *Ibid.*

by Mu'awiyah and 'Umr bin al-'Aas are superior than the sane judgments of Ovais Qarni and 'Umr bin 'Abdul 'Aziz.¹

To Sirhindi, *Taqiya* (to conceal truth in a given situation) the approved practice of Shi'as, is cowardice and timidity, and a state of hypocrisy (*nifaq*).² And to consider *Asad-Ullah* ('Ali) to have resorted to such practice and to emphasize that he remained in the state of *nifaq*, that too for thirty long years, is ridiculous, absurd and irrational.³

The opinion of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi about the Shi'as reaches its climax when he declares that they must be considered infidels (*kufar*).⁴ He writes, "to say of a believer that he is an infidel is a cause of infidelity. A sound tradition runs as follows: "whoever accuses a man of infidelity and says [to him]: 'Enemy of God', and if it is as he said [then all is right]; if not, it [the curse] will come back upon him".⁵ Sirhindi then argues that 'we know certainly that Abu Bakr and 'Umr are faithful, are not enemies of God, and have been promised paradise. Their *takfir*, thus comes back upon those who pronounced it. According to this tradition, therefore, the Shi'a must be pronounced infidels'.⁶ Sirhindi also quotes with approval a legal opinion issued by group of Transoxianian 'ulama

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 36;

³ *Ibid.*; Sirhindi, *Radd*, p. 29.

⁴ Sirhindi does not agree to the views of Imam Ghazali and Abul Hasa al-Ash'ari, who do not consider Shi'as as infidels, because before them the vilification of the Companions does not tantamount to *kufir*. (Sirhindi, *Radd*, p. 30).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

who ruled: 'Since the Shi'a permit cursing Abu Bakr, 'Umr and 'Uthman and one of the chaste wives [of Prophet], which in itself constitutes infidelity, it is incumbent upon the Muslim ruler, nay upon all people, in compliance with the command of the Omniscient king, to kill them and to oppress them in order to elevate the true religion. It is permissible to destroy their buildings and to seize their property and belongings.¹

Sirhindi's vigorous denunciation and refutation of the Shi'a doctrines and to decree them as infidels has to be seen in the historical context, as the various fallacies disseminated by them both within and without the court were damaging the cause of Islam in India. It is, however, important here to point out that somewhat hostile attitude of Sirhindi towards the Shi'a expressed in the *Radd* seems to have lessened as depicted in the *Maktubat* written in the later part of his life. Though still maintaining that their (Shi'a) view of early Islamic history and their hatred for the first three khulafa are unacceptable, but in most cases he refrains from declaring them infidels. In the *Maktubat*, however, he condemns these acts as *fisq* and *bid'at*.² Thus, in comparison with the attitude in the *Radd*, Sirhindi's approach to the Shi'a in the *Maktubat* is mild.³ Friedmann attributes this change in the attitude of Sirhindi, to his joining the sufi *suluk* later.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

² Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 36.

³ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

⁴ Friedmann, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

Sirhindi has also described the various Shi'a sects and their beliefs in his writings.¹ Some of these beliefs contradict the established beliefs of Islam, such as 'Ali is a god; or that the revelation was in fact sent to 'Ali, but Gabriel made a mistake and gave it to Muhammad; or that human souls are born again and again in different bodies. Major Shi'a sects do not hold these beliefs but some very insignificant extremist sects do. They have been condemned as infidels by the *Ummah*.

To sum up, Sirhindi does not substantiate to the theology of Shi'a - the major Muslim sect, and upholds the view that the theology of *ahl al-Sunnah-wa-al-Jama'a* is sound and in accord with the injunctions of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and the consensus of *Aslaf* (previous generation of Muslims).

¹ Sirhindi, *Radd*, pp. 12-15. The Shi'a sects mentioned in the *Radd* are *Sabaiyya*, *Kamliyya*, *Bayaniyya*, *Mughairya*, *Janahiyya*, *Mansuriyya*, *Khatabiyya*, *Ghurabiyya*, *Imamiyya*, *Yunusiyya*, *Mufawwaza*, *Isma'iyiliyya*, *Zaidiyya* and *Imamiyya*. Also see, Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 36.

CHAPTER V

SHEIKH AHMAD SIRHINDI : SUFI THOUGHT

We begin the study of sufi thought of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi by briefly describing the historical development of sufism in Islam. Sufism or Tasawwuf emerged as an important and distinct mode and method to understand and experience Islam. In its inception it was characteristic of *zuhd* (piety), *tawakul* (reliance upon Allah), and simple living. Some of the Companions of Prophet(s) were known as *ashab-i-suf* (companions of piety). In the second century of Muslim Era the personalities like Abu Dhar Gifari, Salman Farsi, Umar bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz etc., with sufi mode of living were known by the epithets like *zahidun* and *‘abidun*.¹ However the rise of sufism owes much to the indulgence of the Muslim rulers into worldly luxuries and the fragmentation of the community into sects.² In its early

¹ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *Tarikh-i-Tasawwuf*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 53-54.

² Fazlur Rehman, *Islam*, London, 1994, pp. 129-131.

period the outstanding sufi personalities were Hasan Basri (642-728 AD), Ibrahim Adham (d. 782 AD), Maruf Kharkhi (d. 815 AD) and Ha-rith Muhasibi (781-857AD). The simple doctrines of sufism got transformed into the complex intellectual ones, with the passage of time, by confronting the foreign cults.¹

The themes of tasawwuf like tawhid, love, knowledge, trust found complex intellectual treatment with the advent of new sufi personage like Rabi'a Basri (d. 185/801), Dhu Nun Misri (b. 180/706), Bayazid Bistami (d. 260/874) and Mansur al-Hallaj (b. 244/857). Rabi'a is known for introducing the doctrine of disinterested love in sufism stating that she worships God not for fear of punishment but for His love only.² Dhu-Nun Misri classified knowledge into several kinds and calls the knowledge of attributes of God as the privilege of the saints only and he further describes this knowledge in terms of *ma'rifah* (gnosis).³ In Bayazid Bistami and al-Hallaj sufism tended towards monistic doctrine, which developed a strong controversy in the subsequent ages. Bayazid's sayings, "I went from God to God, until He cried from me in me, 'O thou I'. "Glory to me! How great is my majesty". "When I came out of 'myself', I found the lover and the beloved as one, for in the world of thought, all is one."⁴ Al-Hallaj does not seem different from Bayazid

¹ Sharif, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

² Farid al-Din Attar, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, tr., A.J. Arberry, England, 1966, p. 40.

³ Sharif, *op. cit.*, pp. 340-341.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 342-344.

when he declares, "I am the truth" (*Ana al-Haqq*).¹ Such idiosyncratic views on 'knowledge', 'annihilation' and 'union with God' were considered unislamic and heretical by the 'ulama as well as by the masses.

With the advent of propounders of tasawwuf like Junaid Baghdadi (d. 298/910), al-Sarraj (d. 456/1063), al-Qushari (d. 465/1072), al-Ghazalli (d.505/1111) and Sheikh 'Abdul Qadir Gilani (d. 525/1166), a trend of reform from within started. As against the doctrine of *fana* (annihilation) and *ma'rifah* (gnosis), the valid knowledge, al-Kharraz and Junaid propounded the doctrine of *baqa* (subsistence) and priority of knowledge over gnosis. The latter does not give any objective validity to sufi state (*ahwal*).² Al-Sarraj's *Kitab al-Luma'* and al-Qushari's famous *Risala* add much to this reformative movement of sufism. It were, however, al-Ghazalli and Sheikh 'Abdul Qadir Gilani whose writings became the corner-stone of this reformative sufism in the later generations.

The endeavours of al-Ghazali are notable as he defines sufism as a meaningful way of knowing God as a unit, and not a means to know extra facts about him.³ To him it (sufism) is both knowledge and action. He criticized those who sought reaching the mystical knowledge in a hurry and criticized the sufi claim in a mystical experience that one reaches God through fusion (*itihad*) into or unity (*wahdat*) with the divine Being.⁴ The

¹ Iqbal, *op. cit.*, p. 82-88.

² Sharif, *op. cit.*, pp. 344-345.

³ Fazlur Rehman, *Islam*, p. 140.

⁴ Raj'i al-Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

knowledge of Him is never knowledge of His self but of His will.¹ In al-Ghazali there is the repudiation of those sufis who preach doctrine of withdrawal of society and non-obligation of shari'ah.² In Abdul Qadir Gilani four stages of spiritual development are propounded—stage of piety, stage of reality (identical with wilayah), stage of resignation and the stage of annihilation.³ To him the final stage is meant to attain the nearness of God and it does not mean monism or pantheism. Tasawwuf consists of generosity, cheerful, submission, patience, constant communion with God through prayer, solitude, *faqr*, humility, sincerity and truthfulness.⁴ In this way both al-Ghazali and Sheikh Abdul Qadir while repudiating ascetic and monistic forms of tasawwuf, there is an attempt to present it as a meaningful way of life which affirms both knowledge and action, obedience to the shari'ah and the communion with God. Down the ages ibn Taymiyah (d. 728/1328) and Ibn Qayam (d. 751/1350) also contributed to the reformative trend of thought in sufism.⁵

The sufi trend of thought found a fertile ground in the Indian sub-continent ever since the spread of Islam in the land.⁶ As the Muslims founded their rule in the sub-continent, sufism flourished throughout the

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Sharif, *op. cit.*, pp. 352-353.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Fazlur Rehman, *Islam*, pp. 147-148.

⁶ See Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, "The Role of 'Ulama in the Spread of Islam in the Indo-Pak Sub-continent—A Critical Appraisal", *Journal of Objective Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1991.

land. In due course of time various sufi orders became popular among the people. Among the earliest sufis who settled on the Indian soil are Abu al-Hasan 'Ali Ibn 'Uthman al-Hijwiri (b. 400/1009)¹ and Sultan Sakhi Sarwar (d.577/1181).²

The Chishti order, one of the most famous sufi orders in India, was founded by Khawaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti (b.590/1193).³ His disciples and successors spread the order in the land. The prominent personalities of the order were Khawaja Qutab al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (d.633/1235),⁴ Sheikh Farid al-Din (b.559/1173),⁵ Sheikh Nizam al-Din Auliya (b.737/1336)⁶ and Nasir al-Din Chirag-i-Delhi.⁷ The Chishtis emphasis love, simplicity, equality and social justice. They were also fond of *Sama'* (sufi music).⁸ The Qadriyah and Suhrawardiyah are other

¹ He is popularly known as Data Ganj Baksh. He was born in Ghazana (400/1009) and died in India. He is the author of famous sufi treatise *Kashf al-Mahjub*. *Minhaj al-Din* and *Kitab Fana wa al-Baq* are his other works.

² He was also one of the early Sufis who came from Arabia and settled in Multan. He is attributed to have made good impact on the section of Hindu Jats.

³ Mu'in al-Din Chishti was born in Sistan (Iran) in 847/1443 and came to India little before the invasion of Shahabuddin Muhammad Ghori and acquired great fame as a sufi here.

⁴ He was born at Ush (Farghana) and joined the discipleship of Khawaja Muhsin al-Din at Ajmir.

⁵ He is popularly known as Baba Farid Ganj Shakar. His father had come from Kabul to Multan where he served as *qadi* (judge). Farid al-Din got enrolled in sufi circle by the impressive personality of Khawaja Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki.

⁶ He was born in Badaun in 737/1336 and became influential sufi of his time. Nizam al-din regulated the life of his disciples in accordance with the shari'ah to reach the higher stages of sufism.

⁷ He came from Khurasan to India and settled at Lahore. At the age of forty-three he came to Delhi where he joined the discipleship of Sheikh Nizam al-Din Auliya.

⁸ Yusuf Husain, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

renowned orders of sufism which got flourished in India before the advent of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariyyah (578/1182),¹ Sheikh Ruknu Din² and Sheikh Sharf al-Din Yahya Manairi (d.782/1380)³ were the followers of Suhrawardiyah order in the sub-continent. Shah Niamat-Ullah,⁴ Makhdum Muhammad Gilani,⁵ Shah Musa Gilani (1002/1593)⁶ and Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlvi (d. 1033/1663) introduced the Qadiriyyah order here. As these two orders have been expounded by their followers, speculative and practical issues about sufism became complex and intricate due to the influence of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of Being) and king Akbar’s (the third Mughal ruler in India) patronage of ‘syncretic’ theosophy.⁷ The Naqashbandiyah order was introduced in the late medieval times in India by Khawaja Baqi Billah⁸ and flourished under Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi has shown keen interest in the subject of tasawwuf, not only in its theoretical but also the practical

¹ He was born in Multan in 1182 C.E. He traveled to many Muslim centers of learning and had got *sanad* for teaching *hadith*. His guide Sheikh Shahabuddin enrolled him in his silsilah and directed him to make Multan his center of activity.

² He was son of Sheikh Baha al-Din Zakariya and contributed substantially to sufism. He was highly respected person of his day, even the Sultan Muhammad bin Taghluq held him in esteem.

³ He belonged to the branch of Suhrawardi order known as Firdausiyah. He was not only a practical guide but also a good exponent of the theoretical side of sufism.

⁴ He lived towards the middle of the fifteenth century.

⁵ See Ikram, *Rud-i Kauthar*, pp. 64-65.

⁶ He was son of Sayyid Hamid Ganj Bakhsh, the sufi of Arabic order and got martyred in Multan.

⁷ Yusuf Husain, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁸ See Supra, p. 68, f. n. 5.

aspect of it. His letters (*Maktubat*) numbering more than five hundred deal in detail about the various themes of sufism especially philosophy of sufism, description of some of its important practices and most importantly his response to *wahdat al-wajud* and elaborating the *Shahudi* (*wahdat al-shahud*) philosophy of sufism. His sufi thought revolves round his philosophy of *wahdat al-shuhud*. The chapter will deal in detail, this aspect of Sirhindi's thought.

***Wahdat al-Shuhud* of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi**

Tawhid (literally means Oneness of God) in Islamic terminology means either the affirmation of God's unity or the ordering of life according to the demands of that affirmation as defined in the shari'ah.¹ But in the sufi literature it has different meanings. Firstly, it means the faith and belief in the unity of God; secondly, to discipline ones life (internal and external) in the light of that faith; thirdly, experience of union and oneness with God; and fourthly, in the light of mystical experience a theosophical or philosophical construction of reality.²

The conception of tawhid as developed by Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi has been termed as *tawhid shahudi* or *wahdat al-shuhud*, which simply means the perception (*shuhud*) of One Being in mystical experience. It is to see one Being or to perceive nothing in existence but one Being. But the perception does not mean that other things are not there, nor does it imply a belief that other things are non-existent. Before

¹ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

² *Ibid.*

elaborating further the philosophy of *wahdat al-shuhud*, it is imperative to give brief introduction of the basic postulates of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s philosophy of *wahdat al-wujud* and Sirhindi’s criticism of it, which will in turn facilitate our understanding of the former—*wahdat al-shuhud*.

Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud*

Sheikh Muhyid al-Din Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali commonly known as Ibn al-‘Arabi¹ is the great mystic in the history of sufism. He, for the depth of his insight and comprehensiveness of his argumentation, is called *Sheikh-i-Akbar* (the greatest Sheikh). He has also been called the ‘Imam’ or the leader of pantheistic mystics²

¹ Ibn al-‘Arabi was born at Murcia (Spain) in 560 AH (1164 A.D.). He was a descendent of the ancient Arabian tribe Tayy and belonged to a pious family. He received his education in Lisbon and then went to Seville, which at that time was a great center of Spanish Sufis and remained there for thirty years. It was also at Seville that he met most of his early spiritual masters in the sufi path. During his visit to Cardova, he met ibn al-Rushd, who was then the judge of the city. Ibn al-‘Arabi traveled very widely in the East. He visited Jerusalem, Mekka, other parts of Hijaz, Baghdad, which he visited twice, Aleppo and Asia Minor. Finally he settled at Damscus where he died in 638/1240 and was buried at the foot of Mount Qasiyum (Affifi, *op. cit.*, pp. xv-xvi). For life and works of Ibn al-‘Arabi also see, Rom Landau, *The Philosophy of Ibn al-‘Arabi*, London, pp. 15-16, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, Harvard, 1964, pp. 92-100

² Before Ibn al-‘Arabi prominent propounders of pantheistic doctrine of the Unity of Being were Ibn Sina and al-Suhrawardi.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna) was born at Asphan (in the neighbourhood of Bukhara), in the year 980. According to ibn Sina, God is not only eternal, unchanging, immaterial Unmoved Mover, but also a being whose existence is necessary because his essence is identical with His being, as the One who is indivisible, as True Perfection, as Pure Benevolence, as a continuously active agent intellect Who, by emanation, creates the cosmos, and all that is in it.

Creation is not a temporal process before Ibn Sina. It is so because time is the measure of change and thus presupposes the existence of matter, and it is not a temporal process because a cause must be contemporaneous with its effect. Furthermore, creation is not *ex-nihilo* (out of nothing) before Ibn Sina, since form can

Contd. on p. 164.....

in Islam.¹

According to Ibn al-'Arabi's philosophy there is only one Being there, and nothing exists beside it.² It means that, to Ibn 'Arabi, (i) all that exists is One Being, (ii) that the One Being has no parts and (iii) that it is neither more here nor less there. Thus the One Being is totally indivisible and homogeneous and nothing else is in existence.

However, Being determines itself, and due to self-determination (*ta'ayyun*) distinctions and differences emerge in Being and multiplicity proceeds from Unity. But in the process, Being neither divides nor rarifies itself. It is same One Being which manifests in its

.....Cont. from p. 163

only be pointed on matter that is already available. Consequently, God, matter, the cosmos and creation itself are eternal. Things exist because God exists, because he contemplates Himself necessarily and because their existence flows directly or indirectly from this contemplation. (Dr. Hamid Naseem Rafiabadi, *Muslim Philosophy and Science*, Srinagar, 1998, p. 126). Imam Razi says, 'among the philosophers who believed that the world is eternal, denied the divine knowledge and resurrection of the bodies, most important was Ibn Sina'. (*Ibid*, p. 134).

Another important sufi thinker who contributed to monistic system of sufi beliefs was Sheikh Shihab al-Din Shrawardi, called *al-Maqtul* (the martyr). He was born in 1155 AH and was executed in 1191 A.H. at Aleppo. He is known as "*Sheikh al-Ishraq*", the propounder of the philosophy of illumination. Like ibn al-'Arabi, he denied the distinction between the necessary being and the contingent being. Necessary being, he says, is that pure being which is the most perfect, whereas the being of the individual person is imperfect: it is related to God as the ray of light is related to the sun. (Fazlur Rahman, *Selected Letters of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi*, pp. 10-11.).

According to al-Suhrawardy, Man, is only a lesser God as God is just a greater man. The scale of the continuum of Reality is differentiated only by points of varying degrees and these points represent the eternal realm of Platonic ideas which he affirms in *Hikmat al-Ishraq*. (Mazhar al-Din Sidiqi, *Concept of Muslim Culture in Iqbal*, Pakistan, 1983, p. 55). The whole of God is existence and the whole of existence is God, before al-Suhrawardy

¹ Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

² Affifi, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

entirety, in different forms. Ibn al-‘Arabi relates it to the different forms of the same thing, sometimes as water, other times as vapour; here as ice and there as steam.

Five Stages of Self-Determination

The Being is indeterminate. It is the stage of *La-ta‘ayyun* or indeterminateness of the unity. In its Determination it passes through five stages. The Being prior to every self-determination is absolutely One (*Ahad*). This is the stage of *Ahadiyah*, Absolute Unity.¹ The second stage is called *Wahdah* or Unicity, when internal distinctions emerge in Being.² This happens when Being present to itself from itself the ideas of all the things that are to appear in the world in future. These ideal prototypes of things are called *a‘yan thabitah*.³ The next stage of self-determination is called *Wahidiyah* or Unity when Being determines itself existentially in objects on the pattern of their ideal prototypes.⁴ In the process of *a‘yan thabitah* the things do not appear in the outer world. These two descents seem to be conceived as conceptual or logical rather than actual; for they are out of time, and the distinction of *Dhat* and *Sifat* is only *Dhahni* or logical.⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 1.

Then begin the real actual descents. The third descent is *ta'ayyun ruhi*, spiritual determination.¹ The unity breaks itself up into so many spirits, e.g., angels. The fourth descent is *ta'ayyun mithali* symbolic or ideal determination, thereby the world of ideas comes into being.² The fifth descent is called *ta'ayyun jasadi*, corporeal determination, when phenomenal or physical beings come into existence.³ Together the five stages of determination are known as *hadrat khams* (the five presences of Being).⁴

Dhat and Sifat are Identical

It follows that for Ibn al-'Arabi *Dhat* (Being) is identical with *sifat*.⁵ The *sifat* express themselves in *tajalliyyat*, i.e., manifestations or modes which are the world and objects. The same identity of divine modes with His attributes, and of attributes with his Being, is brought out in another way. According to Ibn al-'Arabi *Asma-i-Ilahi* (Divine Names) are identical with *Musamma* (the Named), and the *Musamma* is the very being of Allah.⁶ The many Divine Names denote the same entity. Whatever is denoted by each name separately is denoted by all of them together. As all the names denote the same being, thus God can be praised

¹ Mir Valiuddin, "Reconciliation between Ibn Arabi's Wahdat-i-Wujud and the Mujaddid's Wahdat-i-Shuhud", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 25, Nos. 1-4, Jan-Oct. 1952, p. 47.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵ Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁶ *Sharah Fusus al-Hikam*, quoted by Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

with any name or with all the names together.¹ Just as He is manifold as regards His Names, and One as regards His Being, so He is *Ahadiyyat-i-Ma'qula*² or conceptual unity as regards His being, and manifold as regards His existence, because the created beings are nothing but He himself is self-emanation. And this identification of *Asma* and *Musamma* is only another name for the identification of *Dhat* and *Sifat*-Being and Attributes.³

Relation between the World and God

As is case with *Dhat* and *Sifat*, so is with the relation between the world and God, for Ibn al-'Arabi, i.e., one of the identity. To bring out this identification he proceeds from either the negation of the world or from the affirmation of God. Starting from the negation of the world, it (world) is merely nominal, unreal, imaginary, objectively non-existent, holds Ibn al-'Arabi, and that alone exists, is God. The world or multiplicity exists only as the modes of the unity—as His modes. The world has no existence of its own.⁴ Proceeding from the side of God, Ibn al-'Arabi maintains that the world is God.⁵ It is the modes in which the unity has differentiated itself. These modes exhaust the unity wholly. The unity has no existence over and above them—there is absolute nothingness

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ahadiyyat* (oneness) is a stage in mystic journey where the mystic turns away from multiplicity and sees only unity. *Ahaddiyat-i-Ma'qula* means conceptual unity—unity which is conceptually grasped.

³ *Sharah Fusus al-Hikam*, quoted by Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 90

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

beyond these modes. Thus God should be sought in this world and not beyond it, holds Ibn al-‘Arabi.¹

While as identity of God and world is not permanent experience, Ibn al-‘Arabi speaks of another experience which he calls *Farq ba’d al-Jam*². It remains one and the same, whether one may call God or the world or is unable to differentiate the two.³ Here Ibn al-‘Arabi denies transcendence and immanence because they imply duality of existent.⁴ If duality is accepted His infinitude is lost. Hence *Tawhid* should be affirmed with *Tanzih*⁵ (transcendence) and *Tashbih*⁶ (immanence) both.⁷ Again, to Ibn al-‘Arabi God is *Asl* (thing) and the world is His *Zill* (adumbration). But *zill* is the appearance of *asl*, it is, therefore, *asl* appearing, manifesting itself. Hence the world is identical with God.⁸

And since God and the world are one Being, the relation between God and the world cannot be the relation of the Creator and created as theologians believe, or the relation of the One and its

¹ *Ibid.*

² It means experience of difference after union, also called ‘second difference’.

³ *Sharah Fusus al-Hikam*, quoted by Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁴ Affifi, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁵ *Tanzih* (lit. to purify) in theology signifies that the attributes of creatures cannot be ascribed to God. For Ibn al-‘Arabi it means transcendence.

⁶ *Tashbih* (lit. likeness) theologically means attributing likeness of creatures, i.e., the qualities of creatures to the creator. Ibn al-‘Arabi takes likeness to be identity and hence *Tashbihi* comes to mean immanence.

⁷ Affifi, *op. cit.*, p. 19; Landau, *op. cit.*, 32.

⁸ *Sharah Fusus al-Hikam*, quoted by Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.* p. 94.

emanations as neo-Platonic philosophers imagine. For all these relations of causation, creation and emanation imply dualism in varying degrees between God and the world, and contradict the fundamental truth that being is One. Since these terms fail to convey the truth, Ibn al-‘Arabi employs the word *tajalli*, self-uncovering or self-revelation, to describe the relation between God and the world.¹

The whole thought of Ibn al-‘Arabi thus leads to or revolves round *wahdat al-wujud*. And the result of this doctrine as elaborated by Ibn al-‘Arabi is that the subject of every predicate is God. God is knower and the known, the powerful and the object of power, the mover and moved, the willing and willed. God is also the holder of every belief-right or wrong, the doer of all acts-good or bad, and the one who undergoes every experience, pleasurable or painful.

Also, God is transcendent as well as immanent.² He is transcendent insofar as He is different from the world only in the attributes which He does not share with the world such as his infinitude and eternity, creation and lordship, rule and guidance, etc. He is immanent insofar as He is one with the world and He is one with the world in being (*wujud*) as well as all the attributes, acts and experiences of beings in the world-believing and knowing, willing and doing, enjoying and suffering—of which He is the real subject.

¹ Affifi, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

² Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Sirhindi's Criticism of *Wahdat al-Wujud*

Before elaborating Sirhindi's critical observation of *wahdat al-wujud* of Ibn al-'Arabi, it is to be remembered that he contests it exactly on the basis on which the latter holds it, i.e., *kashf-i-sahih* (genuine mystic experience). During his mystic experience, Sirhindi traverses through three stages. At the first stage he has the spiritual experience of *wahdat al-wujud*¹. In the next stage he passes over to the stage of *zilliyat* (adumbration). This is a stage of transition. Here he finds that the world has a being of its own, though it is only the *zill* (shadow), semblance of reality. Here he begins to doubt Unity of Being, as a sense of duality arises.² From the stage of *zilliyat*, Sirhindi passes over to the stage of '*abdiyyat* (servanthood). Now the Duality of God and the world becomes clear to him like the light of the day. He clearly perceives that world and God are *two*, and is convinced of this.³

Having passed through the three important stages of *kashf*, Sirhindi makes a critical observation of *wahdat al-wujud*. Sirhindi's first observation is that this doctrine (*wahdat al-wujud*) is not the *tawhid* of Prophets.⁴ The Prophets do not teach that the Being is one, but teach that God is one. They also do not say that nothing exists besides God but say that there is no god besides Allah. According to Sirhindi, the prophetic

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 31.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 160.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 272.

⁴ *Ibid.*

religion is based on the premise of duality (*ithnayniyat*) rather than the identity of God and the world.¹

Contrary to Ibn al-‘Arabi, Sirhindi holds that *Sifat* (attributes) are not identical with the *Dhat* (Being) but they are over and above the *Dhat*.² He bases his argument on *kashf-i-sahih*. Moreover it is corroborated by the holy verses of the Qur‘an —“Verily God is wholly sufficient unto Himself, He needs none of the worlds”.³ He is perfect in Himself. The attributes, by virtue of which He creates the world, are other than His self.⁴ From rational point of view also the attributes must be other than Him. The world is not the *tajalli* (emanation) of the *Sifat*. Had that been the case, the *Sifat* would have been identical with them. But the attributes are perfect while the world is full of imperfection.⁵ For instance, one of the attributes of God is knowledge, which is in no way comparable to human knowledge, thus none be called the *tajalli* of other.⁶ More important, the Revelation which is the measuring rod of the truth also testifies that the world is not the *tajalli* of the *Sifat*. The Qur‘an says, “the Lord is holier than the qualities which they ascribe to Him”.⁷ Thus there is no resemblance between the human attributes and the Divine.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 26.

³ Al-Qur‘an, 29/5.

⁴ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. III, Letter No. 26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 113.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter. No. 100.

⁷ Al-Qur‘an, XXXVII/180.

⁸ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 1.

While as Ibn al-‘Arabi maintains that world does not have the slightest touch of reality, and it is God alone that exists, Sirhindi contests it by saying that Ibn al-‘Arabi is claiming it at the stage of *Fana* (annihilation). It is at this stage that the mystic, being fully absorbed in the being of God and forgetful of every other thing, perceives nothing but God.¹ As a result he denies the existence of everything else and affirms the being of God alone. It is like the stars which cannot be seen under the impact of bright sunlight as if they do not exist at all, although they are actually present in the sky. Similarly a mystic being overwhelmed by the presence of God is unable to perceive other things, although they exist there.² Infact, Sirhindi contests the claim of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s experience of *Fana* itself by saying that had he fully realized it, he (Ibn al-‘Arabi) would not have been aware of the world, at that stage, and that is why he could identify it with God.³ Here Sirhindi again refers to the Qur’an, as Ibn al-‘Arabi’s position is against its commandments. According to the teachings of the Qur’an, the world exists and God is wholly other than it. Had it not been so, the commandments of commission and omission (*amr bil ma’ruf wa nahi ‘an al-munkar*) and the actions in accordance with those commandments, should have become meaningless. Also if world cease to exist, the belief in Hereafter and reward (*Jaza*) and punishment (*Saza*) become meaningless.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 122 and 291.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 43.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 272; Vol. II, Letter No. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 67.

Further, before Sirhindi it is sceptic to call the world unreal and non-existent, as it is to deny the God's attribute of *Ibda'* (creation). And infact He has created the world. To call it (world) *mawhum* is also objectionable. *Mawhum* has different meanings or cannotations. Firstly it means that the world is simply the invention of our imagination, and if imagination disappears, it (world) will also disappear. This is outright denial of God's attribute of creation.¹ *Mawhum* also may cannote that the world does exist objectively, though its existence as compared to God's is as insignificant as the existence of a mere imaginary thing. In this sense it would be wrong to hold that it is identical with God,² as the world is contingent while God is necessary and they can never be identical. The former is temporal and the latter is eternal. Thus, before Sirhindi both rationally and from religious point of view, it is wrong to hold that the world is identical with God or that it (world) does not exist.³

Asl and Zill

Whereas Ibn al-‘Arabi in attestation of *wahdat al-wujud* believes that the *asl* (thing) and *zill* (adumbration) are identical, Sirhindi contends that they are opposite. They can never be identical, as the *zill* is only a likeness or a copy of the *asl*.⁴ For instance it cannot be said that the

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 58.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 1.

person is himself lengthened if his shadow is lengthened. Therefore *asl* and *zill* can never be identical.¹

Sirhindi finally observes that the philosophy of *wahdat al-wujud* is in conflict with fundamental principles of Islam. For instance, it provides a justification for idolatry. As the philosophy identifies the world with God, worship of any object is the worship of God provided it is worshipped as a manifestation of God.² The idol worshippers have the same belief. Also, the doctrine implies that there is nothing evil in reality. As a manifestation of God, the Absolute Good, everything in existence is good; it is evil only in relation to something other than itself. Even heresy and infidelity are not evil, infact they are good in themselves, and bad or less good only in comparison to faith and Islam.³ This is to discourage preaching and proselitisation and contradicts the mission of the Prophets.⁴

Sirhindi concludes that the experience of *wahdat al-wujud* is subjective and not objective. Being is not one. What the mystic actually experiences is merely unity of perception or *wahdat al-shuhud* i.e., the mystic only feels One.

Wahdat al-Shuhud

The distinction of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi's sufi thought viz-a-viz *wahdat al-wujud* was that he not only differentiated it from

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 160.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 272.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 234; Vol. II, Letter No. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 272.

prophetic *tawhid* and showed that it was incompatible with many a fundamental beliefs on Islam, but also gave an alternative philosophy which was based on *kashf-i-sahih* (genuine sufi experience)¹ and compatible with the commandments of the Qur'an. The philosophy is commonly known as *tawhid shuhudi* or *wahdat al-shuhud*² meaning unity of Being in vision.

The fundamental concept of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi's philosophy of *wahdat al-shuhud* is that God is completely different from the world and absolutely other. God is one being, and the world is another and the two beings have nothing in common.³ In Ibn al-'Arabi's philosophy, the identity is fundamental; it is the same one indivisible, homogeneous being which is God as well as the world. Sirhindi denies

¹ Before Sirhindi, those who criticized or rejected doctrine of Unity of Being were strict observers of the religious law and practices of orthodoxy with no pretensions of mystical intuition or experience. The most prominent of those was Ibn Taimiyah.

Taqi-ud-din Ibn Taimiyah (661/1263-728/1328) is regarded as the greatest critique of *wahdat al-wujud*. He was born twenty three years after the death of Ibn al-'Arabi, in Damascus, the resting place of the latter.

Ibn Taimiyah criticizes Ibn al-'Arabi for believing that *wajud* (being) is one, that the *wujud* of the world is the same as the *wujud* of God, and the objects are God's determinations. He points out that a lot of things that follow from the basic principles of *wahdat al-wujud* are reprehensible and contradict the essentials of Islam. For instance the doctrine identifies the existence of everything, however sordid and filthy, with the existence of God, and ascribes all the attributes of things, good and bad, to Him.

² The first sufi who contradicted the doctrine (*wahdat al-wujud*) and expounded the philosophy which coincides with *wahdat al-shuhud* is 'Ala' al-Dawlah Simnani. He was born at Samnan (Khurasan) in 659/1261 and died in 736/1336. His account of 'stages of his experience' is very similiar to those of Sirhindi. (See Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 236).

³ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. III, Letter No.114.

this postulate of fundamental oneness and asserts that the world is one being and God another.¹

Thus, as God and the world are completely different from one another, the fundamental truth before Sirhindi, is *ithnayniyat* (dualism) and not monism of being.² Although propounding dualism, Sirhindi, however says that it (dualism) is not ultimate; for, although the world is not one with God (*hama 'Ust*), it proceeds from God (*hama az 'Ust*).³ Secondly, the existence of the world is not comparable to Divine existence—God's existence is real whereas the existence of the world is *khayali* (imaginary) and *mawhum* (unreal).⁴ To Sirhindi God's existence is not identical with the existence of the world. God excludes the world rather than includes it. The existence of the world, besides God, does not contradict the truth that in reality there is only One Being there, for the existence of the world is an imaginary existence.⁵

To explain the imaginary existence of the world, Sirhindi cites the example of mirror image.⁶ The presence of the world is like the presence of an image of an object in a mirror. The presence of an image and the existence of the object have nothing common. The object is there at a distance before the mirror. On the other hand, the image, though it

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 1.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 272.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 1

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 98.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 1 and 98.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 109.

appears to be behind the mirror, is not there. Nor is the image in the mirror. Therefore, the image is not in the space (*kharij*) in which the object is. Many other properties associated with the object are also not found in the image. Hence, the presence of the image is not the existence of the object, for the existence of the object is real existence in the real space, whereas the existence of the image is an unreal existence, only in *hiss* (perception) and *wahm* (imagination), located in *kharij zilli* (shadow space). The existence of the image, therefore, is a *wujud zilli* (shadow existence), completely different and separate from the *wujud asli* (real existence) of the object.¹

The shadow existence of the image is similar to the existence of the world, the latter being different and separate from the existence of God. As the presence of the image does not mean that there are two objects there, similarly the presence of the world does not justify the assertion that there is a duality of being, a world existing besides God.²

In order to explain the shadowy, non-real status of the world, Sirhindi gives his concept of '*adam* (non-being).³ Accordingly, the world is a determination not of being, as Ibn al-‘Arabi believes, but of its opposite non-being with a reflection (*zill*) of God's being on it.⁴ The knowledge that we have in a particular object is not the determination of

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 114.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 234; Vol. II, Letter No. 98.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 1.

God's knowledge, but of its opposite ignorance with a reflection (*zill*) of God's knowledge on it; similarly the power of an object is not the determination of God's power, but the determination of its opposite impotency with a reflection (*zill*) of God's power on it. So is the case with other attributes.¹ The same is true of the essence of an object—it is a determination of non-being with a reflection (*zill*) of god's being on it.² It is important here to note that the *zill* of a thing is not the thing itself, as Ibn al-'Arabi believed.³ The *zill* of an object is different from the object numerically as well as qualitatively. According to Prof. Asnari, these two fundamental departures from Ibn al-'Arabi's philosophy, namely that things are essentially determinations of non-being and that the reflections of Being that sustain the non-beings are numerically and qualitatively different from Being and its attributes, make Sirhindi's philosophy altogether different.⁴

In Sirhindi's view, thus, the world is in essence non-being, non-existing and unreal. By the reflection of God's existence and attributes, it (world) has been imparted a shadow existence, a semblance of reality, and elevated from absolute nothingness and given a permanence and stability.⁵ It is like an object of magic, which seems to exist in the world, but in reality exists only in vision and imagination. Just as a

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter no. 109.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter no. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 114.

⁴ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

⁵ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No.1.

magical creation is unreal, but not absolutely illusory, so is the world unreal, but not a mere fantasy.¹ The difference between a magical object and an object of the world is only that while the former is unstable and momentary, the latter, because it is the creation of God, has got a permanence and stability enough to be the basis of life in this world and the next. The reality or existence of the world has also been explained by another example. Suppose one of the ends of a wooden stick is put into fire and catches flame. When the stick is moved quickly round in a circle by holding its other end, an appearance of a circle of fire is produced. Suppose this appearance is made to exist by itself. A circle of fire has been produced thereby. The existence of the world is of the kind of the existence of such a circle.² Thus the world is not real in itself, reality has been somehow bestowed on it. In short it is both unreal and real, a non-real reality.³

Divine Attributes

According to Sirhindi, Divine attributes are of two kinds, negative and positive. The negative attributes are of two types; firstly those which are meant to deny all imperfections in God's Being, e.g., that He has no equal and no rival, no children and no parents.⁴ Secondly those which indicate His beyondness, e.g., that He is not body or physical, is neither substance nor attribute, is not space or spatial, is not limited or

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 109.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 58.

³ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 114

⁴ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. III, Letter No.17.

finite, i.e., He is above the application of our categories of thought.¹ The positive attributes are also of two kinds. One kind are relative attributes which are relatively true of Him, e.g., *Qidam* (Self-Subsistence), *Azliyyat* (Eternity), and *Uluhiyyat* (Worshipability).² We affirm these attributes of him only because the attributes opposite to them are signs of imperfection; and in comparison with these attributes denote perfection; and not because they adequately describe his nature.³ Otherwise the Divine essence has nothing to do with necessity and possibility, etc.⁴ But human thought is confined to the three fundamental categories of being, viz., necessity, possibility and impossibility: therefore it is proper to attribute necessity to Him.⁵ The second kind are, essential attributes which adequately describe His nature and are absolutely true to Him. They form part of His essence, like, *Hayat* (Life), *‘Ilm* (Knowledge), *Qudrat* (Power), *Irada* (Will), *Takwin* (Creation), *Kalam* (Speech), *Sam‘* (Hearing) and *Basr* (Seeing)⁶. These eight attributes are known as *Sifat-i-Haqiqiyah* (Ultimate Attributes) or “Attributes of Essence”.

Relation Between *Dhat* and *Sifat*

Now, as far as relation between *dhat* (being) and the *sifat* (attributes) of God on one hand and between *dhat-o-sifat* and the world on

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*

the other hand are concerned, Sirhindi maintains that His *sifat* are other than and in addition to his *dhat*, and that the world is the Zill or effect of his *sifat*.¹ About this problem of theology, Sirhindi follows the Maturadya school of thought.² But he at the same time explains his position on the basis of his mystic experience as well. He maintains that according to it (mystic experience) too the attributes are not identical with the being and that the being of God is perfect by and in itself and does not stand in need of the attributes for its perfection.³ God is *mawjud*, has existence; but he exists by His own being, by his own self, and not in virtue of the quality of *wajud* or existence which has been added to this being.⁴ Similarly, He is *Hayi* (Living) by His own being; He is *Qadir* (Powerful) by His own being. Same is true for other attributes *Sami'* (Hearing), *Basir* (Seeing) and *Khaliq* (Creator).⁵ His attributes, viz., existence, life, knowledge, power, etc., are the *ta'yyanat* or determinations or the descents of His being.

Relation between *Dhat-o-Sifat* and the World

About the relation between *dhat-o-sifat* and the world, Sirhindi maintains that the *sifat* are the *azlal* (effects) of the *dhat* and the world is *zill* (effect) of the *Sifat*.⁶ The order or the gradation of these *azlal*

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 26.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

(effects) in the system of Sirhindi is that the Perfect Being is the cause of the quality of existence (*wujud*). Then follows the *sifat-i-hayat* (quality of life) because life is not conceivable without existence. Then comes the *sifat-i-'ilm* (quality of knowledge); then *sifat-i-qudrat* (quality of power); then *sifat-i-irada* (quality of will); then *sifat-i-basr* (quality of seeing); then *sifat-i-kalam* (quality of speech); and then the *sifat-i-takwin* (quality of creation).¹ The *sifat-i-takwin* is the cause of the creation of the world, and the world is its *zill* (effect) and not its *tajalli* (mode). These attributes of God are over and above the being of God, for the Perfect Being brings them into existence one by one for the sake of creating the world. It is by means of these attributes which He adds to His being that the Perfect Being who is sufficient unto Himself and needs nothing, turns to the creation of the world and creates it. The doctrine that the *sifat* are over and above the *dhat* (*Zayid 'ala al-dhat*) of God and not identical with it is the position of Maturide school of thought which the Sirhindi follows.²

Relation between Man and God

About the man, Sirhindi holds that the essence of man is the soul, and that the soul is the creation of God.³ The relation between the man and God is that of *'abd* (worshipper) and the *Ma'bud* (Worshipped). *'Abdiyyat* (servitude) means the man should change his whole life according to the Divine will and should obey his commandments of

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 26.

³ It has been dealt in detail in Chapter III (Concept of Man), p. 109ff.

commission and omission simply because they are His commands.¹ There is also another relation between man and God, i.e., *ma'rifat* (cognition). But true *ma'rifat* only means that man should realize that he is incapable of knowing God. As Hadhrat Abu Bakr has said, "to realize one's inability to comprehend Him is the true comprehension".²

As already discussed, Sirhindi passed through three stages in his *mystic experience*. Beginning from *wujudiyyat* (unitysim), he reached to *zilliyat* (adumbration) where the stage of the *wujudiyyat* became doubtful to him. And after *zilliyat* he attained the stage of '*abdiyyat* (servitude). At this stage, the error of *wujudiyyat* become clear to him and therefore he denounces it. It thus becomes clear to him that mystic experience has no objective validity with regard to *dhat-o-sifat*. Hence he confesses to the following negative attributes of the Divine Being; God is beyond all such '*asma-o-sifat* as can be comprehended by us. He is beyond all *zuhur-o-butun* (externalization and internalization), beyond all *mawsul-o-māfsul* (realizable and explicable), beyond all *kashf-o-shuhud* (mystic intuition and experience), beyond all *mahsus-o-ma'qul* (empirical and rational) and beyond all *mawhum-o-mutakhayyal* (conceivable and imaginable).³ He, the Holy One, is beyond the Beyond, again beyond the Beyond, again beyond the Beyond.⁴ Thus whatever is known through mystic intuition is merely a subjective experience, without any objective

¹ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 30.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 122.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. I.

⁴ *Ibid.*,

validity. In short, God can never be apprehended through mystic experience. Therefore, faith in the Unseen (*iman bil ghaib*) is unavoidable. Such a faith is possible only when in thought and imagination it becomes evident that God is unknowable, unapproachable and inexperienceable.¹ Keeping in view the human limitations and His Beyondness, the faith in the Unseen alone is valid in His case.

To know any thing besides His Beyondness etc., can be known through Revelation. The theologians ought to be followed as they frame their conceptions about the being and attributes of God from the Qur'an.² Thereof Sirhindi maintains that God is Creator (*Khaliq*) of Earths and Heavens, mountains and oceans, vegetables and minerals as well as human beings with all their potentialities. In short, He is the Creator of all things, and He has created them out of pure nothing (*'adam-i-mahad*). He alone is the Bestower of all blessings, the healer of all ills and the provider of all needs. He is the *Sattar* (Concealer) who overlooks our sins, He is *Halim* (Forbearing) who does not take us hastily to account for our wrongs. He deserves all praise and gratitude for His innumerable benefactions. Man does not know even how to value His goodness and greatness. He is the *Hadi* (Guide) who through His Prophets (*Anbiya'*) enlightens the ignorant mankind of His existence and essence. They inform us of what He approves and disapproves, and of the useful and injurious in this world and the Hereafter.³ He is *Ahad* (One), the

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 17.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 287.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 17.

Wahdahu-la-Sharik, has no equal. He is the only Divine Being. There is no one else who possesses the same qualities (*sifat*) and he alone deserves worship (*'Ibadat*).¹ He encompasses or comprehends everything, is everywhere with us, and is nearer to us than our *habl al-warid* (life-artery). But the nature of His *Ihata* (comprehension), *qurb* (nearness) is beyond our understanding. *Hayat* (life), *'Ilm* (Knowledge), *Qudrat* (Power), *Irada* (Will), *Sam'* (Hearing), *Basr* (Seeing), *Kalam* (Speech), and *Takwin* (Creation) belong to His attributes, which are like His being *bichun-o-bichigun* (incommensurable and uncomprehensible).²

It may not be inferred from the above summary of Sirhindi's sufi thought that he altogether rejects the validity of mystic experience. But, what he emphasis is that the purpose of mystic experience is only to interpret and explicate the Revelation; and not to add to it. In fact both mystic experience, as well theological reason are subject to the test of Revelation.

According to Sirhindi, sufism is to help man realize the purpose he has been created for. Revelation says that man is the servant of God and the purpose of his life is to serve God. Sufism is to help man realize deeply and intensely the truth that he is a servant of God, and nothing more. Sufism is also to help man be a true and perfect servant of God. The sufi *tariqah* and *haqiqah* are subservient to the shari'ah.³ Sufi *Kashf* is no means to know *ahkam shar'iyah*. The only source is the

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 266.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 36.

Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet, the *Qiyas* of the *Mujtahids* and their *Ijma'*.¹ In fact, the objective of sufi *suluk* is to perfect faith in *ahkam shar'iyah* so as to facilitate and accomplish their realization.²

From the above discussion of Sirhindi's ideas, the conception that he advances is that, the essence of sufism—an effort to reaffirm the vision of reality, has been well defined in the Revelation of the Prophet. He believes that the Prophet has stated the fundamental truths very clearly and has not left it to the reason of a philosopher or the *kashf* of a mystic to tell what these truths are or what they really mean. We cannot know God through *kashf-o-shuhud* (intuition and mystic experience). Hence we should revert to the Revelation of the Prophet and to '*ulama-i-zahir* (divines), as their conception is derived direct from Revelation.³

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 55.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 217.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 286.

CHAPTER VI

SHEIKH AHMAD SIRHINDI : IMPACT

The influence of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi on the subsequent religious and political scenerio of Indian sub-continent has been too great. "The mission of the Mujaddid which filled a large space in the religious and political history of the Muslim community of the seventeenth century, was undoubtedly a success".¹ In his efforts he was successful in neutralizing the work of Akbar and affecting a change in the mentality of his successors towards the Orthodox Islam. He also effected a change in the outlook of Muslim Nobility and upper classes in general. His thought put an impact on the every section of Muslim society whether a sufi or a theologian, the ruler or the ruled. And it seems no exaggeration on part of Mulana Azad who holds only Mujaddid responsible for the reformation and revival of Islam during the

¹ Yasin, *op. cit.*, p. 145

Mughal period.¹ “The father of the Religio-Political Reform Movement of Orthodox Islam in India”,² not only influenced his contemporaries but also the future generations. The chapter will trace the impact of Sirhindi’s thought on his contemporaries and posterity, under various sub-headings.

I. IMPACT OF SIRHINDI ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUFISM

(a) Back to Mohammad

Sirhindi’s call was really the call “Back to Muhammad”. Besides his conception of Tawhid, his re-emphasis on the Prophethood of Muhammad(s) affected the Islamic mind to a great extent and gave a new turn to sufism.

In sufism, an awakening started to purify it from the extraneous elements and draw it exclusively from that pure and perennial fountain-head from which it had arisen, i.e., directly from the Prophet Muhammad(s). Accordingly, it happened that Khawaja Mir Nasir,³ who belonged to Sirhindi’s school of sufism, got into a trance, which lasted for a week. Then Imam Hasan, the grandson of Prophet, himself appeared to him in his cell and initiated him into a new mystic method, insisting that the method shall be called after the Prophet, “Muhammadi”, because that was the genuine method of Prophet of Allah.⁴ ‘Abdul Bari Aasi in his

¹ Maulana Adul Kalam Azad, *Tazkira*, Delhi, p. 264.

² Yasin, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

³ Khawaja Mir Nasir (1697-1759) was a lineal descendent of the celebrated Kwaja Bahaddin, the founder of Naqashbandiya Order.

⁴ Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Diwan-i-Khawaja Mir Dard observes that it was soon after this visionary contemplative event sometime in the 30's of the eighteenth century that the *Tariqa al-Muhammadya* (a branch of Naqashbandya) was born.¹

The *tariqa* gave supreme importance to the person of Hadhrat Muhammad(s) and stressed "the concept of the reality of Muhammad, not only as the historical man but the essence or eternal spirit (underlying all creation), the highest and final revelation of God's Word".² For sufis Hadrat Muhammad(s) was also the first sufi master of the Path. Dedication to the Prophet in a personal way, therefore, was a prelude to spiritual initiation into the mystries and mystical experience, which could be attained only through his grace and benefactions. Concentration on his image and contemplation of his attributes and virtues became a cardinal sufi exercise known as *Tawajjuh*. Since it was not possible for the novice to concentrate on the absent image of the Prophet, the practice of *Tawajjuh*³ to which the Muhammaddiyas gave even greater importance than to *Dhikr*, became necessary.

¹ Akhtar Qamber, 'Fundamentalism or a Return to Fundamentals?' *Islam and the Modern Age*, Vol. XX, No. 2, May 1989, pp. 151-167.

² Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 253.

³ *Tawajjuh* means facing or confronting something. It had its origin in the worshipper facing the *Qiblah*, the central sanctuary or temple of the Ka'ba in Mekka; elsewhere the Mihrab, the niche in the wall of a mosque, which points in the direction of the *Qiblah*. Facing the *Qiblah* with concentration and reverence, it was believed, induced spiritual awareness and sharpened the mystical sense. In the course of time, there grew a sufi tradition that the *Qiblah* could be represented by sufi *Murshid* (Spiritual master). Some sufi manuals instruct the *salik* to make thy Sheikh thy *Qiblah*, in order to give concrete, visible form to something abstract and distant and to expel distractions during meditation.

⁴ Qamber, *op. cit.* p. 164.

Khawahja Mir Dard (1721-1785), son of Khawaja Mir Nasir, was the first to embrace the *Tariqah al-Muhammadiya* initiated by his father. Mir Dard also laid great stress on the doctrine of *Tawajjuh*. He had the experience of having had his own revered father as his sufi teacher whose beauty reflected his perfection (*Bari*) and whose close companionship Mir had enjoyed and valued better than that of books.¹ Close relationship between the *Sheikh* and the *murid* was “regarded in the Naqashbandi tradition as one of the most important disciplines of the mystical life.”²

During moments of intense intimacy with his sufi guide and concentration of his form and attributes, the *murid* is able to identify himself with and be annihilated in the *Sheikh*.³ This stage is called *Fana fil Sheikh*.⁴ It is followed by the concentration of the image, the attributes and virtues of the Prophet in an experience called *Fana fil Rasul* (annihilation in and union with the Prophet). If the *salik* persists, in the final stage he could experience *Fana fi-Allah* (annihilation in and union with the Divine) and might have direct insight into *al-Haqq*.⁵ Hence the theory that the *Sheikh* represents the Prophet and the Prophet represents Allah. From this high point of spiritual exaltation would begin the descent to a state known as *Baqā Billah*, an abiding in Allah. *Baqā Billah* was

¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Pain and Grace*, p. 78.

² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³ Qamber, *op. cit.* p. 164.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

possible while still living and participating in worldly duties and concerns known as *Baqa bi 'Ilah dar Anjuman*. This was the coveted mystical ideal of the Naqashbandiyas', particularly that of *al-Muhammadiyahs*'.¹

The new method-*tariqa al-Muhammadiyah*, which Mir Nasir and Mir Dard believed to have been a work of inspiration, was developed when both the father and the son wrote voluminous books on it. The crux of the method was, "break away from every one and attend only to your master (Muhammad)".² They believed that due to ignoring of this principle divisions have been created among the Muslims. Thus the right course to the "Muhammadiis" was, go back to *Kitab-o-Sunnah* and follow the Prophet exclusively.

(b) Foundation of the Mujaddidya Order

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi laid foundation of a new order, known after him as *Silsilah Mujaddidya*, a sub-division of the Naqashbandiya order.³ According to Sheikh Muhammad Ikram, the propagation of the order was a significant service that Sirhindi rendered towards Islam in India, as it was more close to the Shari'ah among the various Orders in the country.⁴ Upon the beginning of the twentieth century, Islam in India was over-shadowed by sufi-mode of thinking to the extent that no one thought of serving Islam without the intermediary of a

¹ *Ibid.*

² Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³ Yasin, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁴ Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 285.

sufi order.¹ Thus there was a need of a *silsilah*, which would emphasize the obedience of the shari‘ah as the first pre-requisite, and the Mujaddidiya order filled the need.² The salient features of the order, according to the author of *Jawahir-i-Mujaddidiya* are: over-emphasis on the obedience of *Sunnat-i-Suniyya* and restraint from the innovations (*bid‘at*); due respect to the Sunnah of the Companions; the *Chilla* (Forty day seclusion), loud remembrance of God (*Zikr bil Jahr*), Sama’ (sufi music), decoration of the tombs, the female gatherings, *tawhid-i-wujudi* and the philosophy of *hama ‘Ust*, all are prohibited.³ Also, the order not only laid down the importance of the shari‘ah but also emphasized the superiority of the shari‘ah over *tariqa*. Sirhindi used to say, *hal* ⁴ is subservient to the shariah and vice-versa.⁵ The Companions of the Prophet(s) were regarded superior to all saints. After the death of Sirhindi, the order developed under his disciples.

(c) Impact on the Naqashbandiya *Silsilah*

Sirhindi introduced some eccentric concepts of his own choosing—innovations rather than orthodoxy—for instance, the concept of *Quyyumhood*. Investing himself with the title of *Quyyum* he expounded “his theories on Prophethood, Sainthood and Quyyumiyathood”.⁶ According to Sirhindi, a *Quyyum* was the highest representative of Allah

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Ahmad Husain Khan, *Jawahir-i-Mujaddidiya*, Lahore, p.24.

⁴ Literally state of mind or will. In Sufism, a passing feeling experience such as elation, suppression, hope, fear etc., contrasted to more durable or permanent states such as patience, gratitude, love and trust, which are called *maqam*.

⁵ Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 286.

⁶ Anne Marie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, North Carolina, 1975, pp. 363-364.

on earth, higher even than the *Qutb* who is placed highest in the traditional mystical hierarchy. He based the idea of *Quyyum* on the following verse of the Qur'an, "We did indeed offer the Trust to Heavens and the Earth and Mountains, but they refused to be undertake it, being afraid, but man undertook it; he was indeed unjust and foolish".¹ The "trust" in the above verse has been interpreted by Sirhindi, "as being the *Quyyumiyat* of every object which the Almighty awarded to the "Perfect Man".² "He (*Qayyum*) is that exalted person on whom the whole order of existence depends. All the angels, spirits, and human beings and every other object look towards him for assistance. He is intermediary between man and the Almighty of all spiritual and mundane benefits. The 'Arif, on whom the dignity of a *Quyyum* is bestowed, acts like a minister to a king; and the business of created beings is conducted through him. Though favours are received from the king, the *wazirs* are the intermediaries. Though this distinguished office is essentially meant for eminent prophets, it can be bestowed by the Almighty upon any dignitary, whom He desires, by way of inheritance."³

Sirhindi made similar claims for his son Ma'sum and his descendents to come. In a letter that he wrote from Ajmer to his son Ma'sum, he informed him that the robe, which he had been wearing, had been exchanged for another one. The robe, which he previously wore, was conferred upon him (Ma'sum). The *Khilat* which was taken from him (Sirhindi) belonged to the affairs of the *Quyyumiyat*. It was associated

¹ Al-Qur'an, Chapter al-Ahzab, verse, 72.

² Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 74.

³ *Ibid.*

with training and perfection and formed a link between him and all that existed in the universe.¹ Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum has also given a vivid account of the transfer of the *Quyyumiyat* to him by his father in his lifetime.² Elucidating the term *Quyyum*, Ma'sum says, "*Quyyum* is the *Kalifa* of the Almighty in this world and His deputy. *Aqtab* and *Abdal* are included in the circle of his *Zilal* (adumbration, effect)³.

After the death of Muhammad Ma'sum, in 1668, his son Khawaja Naqashband, known as Hujjatullah, assumed the title of third *Quyyum*.⁴ The third *Quyyum* died in 1702, and was succeeded by Muhammad Zubair, as the fourth *Quyyum*.⁵ It may be mentioned here that, it was in Sirhindi's time that the Naqashbandi line of esoteric succession was established in the family and became a hereditary principle somewhat alien to the Arab as also to the sufi esoteric basis of succession.⁶

The idea of *Quyyumhood*, as propounded by Sirhiindi, has come under severe criticism. Some support and others oppose it. Maulana Zaid Abul Hasan Faruqi defends it by saying that, the *Quyyumiyat* is a superior stage of *Wilayat*. It is a particular period of time that gives rise to *Aqtab*, Ghauth, etc., and similarly the *Quyyumhood* appeared with the

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 104.

² His father comforted with the prophecy, "As long as I am alive, your existence will depend on me while the existence of others will depend upon you".

³ Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum, *Maktubat-i-khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum*, (Kanpur edition), Letter No. No. 86.

⁴ Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*, p. 402.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 406

⁶ Qamber, *op. cit.* p. 161.

appearance of Sirhindi, on the scene.¹ Some scholars have tried to see the advancement of *Quyyimiyathood* by Sirhindi, to counter the Imamathood concept of the Shi'as and to give psychological boost to the Sunni cause in India.² Sheikh Muhammad Ikram³, Aziz Ahmad⁴, and 'Uruj Qadri⁵ criticize it as a heretic idea.

It is however, to be remembered that the claims of Sirhindi and his successors are founded on mystic intuition and revelation, as such they cannot be subjected to the test of cold logic and reason, as points out Ghulam Mustafa Khan, the translator of many a writings of Sirhindi. However, the claims of Sirhindi, may best be judged in the light of his own writings, as he himself criticized the mystic revelations and intuitions of others and found some of them to have originated from a morbid state of mind, and that every claim and any claim, should pass the test of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.⁶

Under the guidance and leadership of Sirhindi, Naqashbandi *tariqa* not only spread to the different regions of India but also outside it. He sent his trained disciples to the important cities of India such as Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Saharanpur, Badayun, Jawnpur, Allahbad, Patna, Manglakot (Bengal), Burhanpur (Deccan), with the result the practices of

¹ Quoted by Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 300.

² Qamber, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

³ See, Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, pp. 292-304.

⁴ See Aziz Ahmad, *Hind Wa Pak Mein Islami Culture*, Delhi, 1991, p. 282.

⁵ See Sayyid Ahmad 'Uruj Qadri, *Tasawwuf aur Ahl-i-Tasawwuf*, Delhi, 1994, pp. 318 and 325

⁶ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 207 and 221.

the *silsilah* got hold of the cities.¹ The popularity of the *silsilah* can be ascertained by a remark of Jehangir, (1014/1606-1037/1627) which he wrote sixteen years after Sirhindi had started his work: 'The disciples of the Shaykh have spread all over the cities and the towns of India'.² The *silsilah* also spread outside India, to the countries like, Afghanistan and Turkistan, the lands of the first Naqashbandi saints, and to Tabristan and Iran. Sirhindi sent his deputies (*Khulfa'*) to Shadman (Ispahan), Husayn Addal (Kabul), Kisham (Badakhshan), Berk (near Qandhar) and Taliqan.³

(d) Impact on Sayyid Ahmad Barailwi

Shah Sayyid Ahmad Barailwi (1201-1246AH) was a prominent mystic who was highly influenced by the sufi thought of Sirhindi. From his early childhood he was mystically minded and felt in himself a strong propensity to follow only the Prophet(s). Earlier he was a disciple of Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz but broke away from him on the practice of *Tasawwur-i-Sheikh* (picturing the spiritual guide in imagination), which he regarded as idolatry.⁴ He perused his spiritual development on his own and his reputation spread far and wide. Moulvi 'Abdul Hayy and Shah Isma'il, the two eminent relations of Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz also joined him.⁵ His following increased in thousands and was hailed everywhere as the

¹ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

² Jehangir, *op. cit.*, pp. 272-273.

³ Ansari, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁴ Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁵ *Ibid.*

true *Khalifa*. He was martyred in 1246 AH at Balakot in a holy war against Sikhs of the Punjab.¹

Sayyid Barailwi followed the school of Sirhindi. The Sayyid believed that he had a special affinity to the Prophet(s) and that he got spiritual guidance directly from him. He accordingly found a new *tariqah* and called it *Tariqa-i-Nabuwat*.² The other methods, according to him, are based on *Tariq-i-wilayat*.³ The salient feature of the new *tariqa* was that the mystic should first make all his actions in conformity with the Sunnah of the Prophet, and only then *dhikr* (remembrance) and *fikr* (contemplation) should be taken.⁴ The *dhikr* according to the *tariqa* is the recitation of the Qur'an, and reciting the prayers, which the Prophet used to recite. While the *fikr* consists in contemplation on the Goodness and Grace of God, and in making our will wholly subordinate to His will, and in realizing His omnipresence at every moment, etc.⁵

The Sayyid, like Sirhindi, denies pantheism and believes in theism. *Sahw* (sobriety) is superior to *sukr* (spiritual intoxication). He preaches *jihad* in place of *sama'* (music hearing for the sake of ecstasy), and demands social service in place of solitude.⁶ He punctiliously follows

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

² That method of spiritual development, which aims at developing only those values, which the holy Prophet aimed at, is called *Tariqa-i-Nabuwat*.

³ The method of mystical development, used by mystics of Islam, and aimed at cultivating mystical mode of life.

⁴ Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Kitab-o-Sunnat and strenuously and emphatically denounces *bid'at* (innovations).¹

(e) The Sufi Way and the Prophetic Way

The substantial difference, that Sirhindi emphasized between sufi way and prophetic way,² was well received in the sufi circles, and affected the subsequent development of sufism. A need was felt to reform sufism, and to bring it more close to the shari'ah.

Shah Wali-Ullah (1702-1762) on his day, also emphasized the difference between the sufi and the prophetic way. In his famous work, *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah*, he writes, 'there are two ways to attain happiness (*Sa'adah*). One is the way of theistic philosophers (*al-muta'allihun min al-hukama'*) and God-intoxicated sufis (*majdhub min al-sufiyah*); and other is the way for which the prophets are sent'.³ In his other writings he describes the difference (between saintly way and the prophetic way) more clearly. He writes, 'during the time of Prophet and his Companions, even many generations later, people were primarily concerned with the commands of the *Shar'*; other things i.e., feelings and sentiments, were associated with the carrying out of those commands. Their *ihsan* was prayer (*Salat*), fasting, *dhikr*, reading the Qur'an, Hajj, charity and *jihad*.⁴ None of them ever spent an hour in meditation

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

² *Supra*, pp. 143-148

³ Shah Wali-Ullah, *Hujjat-Ullah-i al-Balighah*, Cairo, Vol. I, pp. 109-110.

⁴ Shah Wali-Ullah, *Hama'at*, (Urdu tr., Muhammad Sarwar), Delhi, 1969, p. 30.

(*tafakkur*), or thought of a pure presence of God isolated from *dhikr* and other things, or tried to attain it. The best of them got pleasure in communion (*munajat*) with God, in *Salat*, and in *dhikr*, in recitation of the Qur'an. None of them emitted a cry, went into ecstasy, behaved abnormally or uttered *shath*. The conviction (*yaqin*) which they had was the living consciousness of things in which they had faith.¹

Shah Isma'il² in his works also substantiates and elaborates further, the difference (between sufi way and prophetic) held by Sirhindi and Shah Wali-Ullah. In his work *Sirat al-Mustaqim*, he begins with a penetrating analysis of love, and shows how this central concept means one thing in the prophetic way and another in the sufi way. He says that the sufi love is a passionate love (*hubb-i- 'ishqi*). It is born of a realization on the part of the sufi that his spirit is a Divine spirit (*ruh-i-Ilahi*), that it is imprisoned in a material body, and that he would not be happy unless he frees it from the prison and attains union with God. With this realization the sufi declares war against the body and tries to rescue his spirit.³

On the other hand, the love which the shari'ah speaks of is a 'rational love' (*hubb-i- 'aqli*). It is born of a sense of gratitude of God for

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

² His complete name was Shah Muhammad Isma'il. The grandson of Shah Wali-Ullah, was born in 1189/ 1779 and died in 1246 / 1830. He studied Islamic science with his two uncles, Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz and Shah Rafi al-Din and completed his *suluk* under direction of Sayyid Ahmad Baraillwe, with whom he tried to resist Sikh power in north India and restore Muslim dominance. Shah Isma'il and his shaykh tried to purify sufism and bring it closer to the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

³ Shah Isma'il, *Sirat-i-Mustaqim*, Meerut, p. 10.

His bounties, and of a sense of greatness, perfection, and majesty of God, on the one hand, and of man's absolute dependence on His and his own nothingness, on the other. These are according to the Qur'an, the twin sources of faith, and on this ground Shah Isma'il calls the prophetic love 'the love of faith' (*hubb-i-imani*).¹

According to Shah Isma'il, the two—passionate love and love of faith, also differ in factors which strengthen them (*mu'ayyidat*) and the effects and results which follow from them (*thamarat*). While as the passionate love is promoted by cutting down the needs of the body—food, drink, sleep etc., and by speaking little and by reducing contact with people, the 'love of faith' can be promoted by obeying the shari'ah, by following the Sunnah, and honestly observe the rules of the Qur'an and the Hadith regarding external behaviour and internal life.²

The passionate love leads to the union with God. The traveller of this path loses his individuality and is assimilated in God, just as a piece of iron put in a fire becomes red like fire. The end of 'love of faith', on the other hand, is not union, illumination or the vision of One Being. God bestows upon the lover of faith quite different honours. He reveals in his heart the truth of religion, makes him its witness, and raise him as its preacher and defender. He bestows on him real conviction (*iman-i-haqiqi*), and elevates him to the position of His own deputy (*Khalifat-Allah*) and helps him to establish the shari'ah.³

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.

² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

Thus, the candid distinction, that Sirhindi made, between sufi way and the prophetic way disseminated to the subsequent generations and affected the later development in sufism. Hitherto sufism had nurtured trends leading to heterodoxy but as the result of his writings, it turned more and more in the direction of orthodoxy.¹ Making *tasawwuf* subservient to the obedience of the Qur'an and Sunnah, Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, writes "the essence of tasawwuf is to surrender one's will to the will of God, adorn oneself in His commands, be forgetful of things other than God (*ma-siwa-Allah*), and to live according to the sayings of the Prophet (Hadith)."² Another important sufi-thinker, Maulana Ashraf 'Ali Thanwi stresses the same point. Disapproving of the alien practices related with tasawwuf and emphasising the imperativeness of the obedience of the shari'ah to the latter, Maulana Thanwi writes, "tasawwuf has nothing to do with intuition and miracles (*kashf-o-karamat*), or with *shafa'at* (mediation on behalf of others) on the day of judgement. It is neither a means for solving worldly problems—healing of diseases, growth of means of livelihood etc., nor for making predictions. It is also not meant to cultivate an internal (*batni*) state of senselessness, where one becomes forgetful of oneself and others. But the real objective of *tariqat* is to please God by means of total obedience to the shari'ah."³ The trend to reform sufism and to bring it more close to the shari'ah, is a substantial impact of sufi thought of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. Connected

¹ Qureshi, *'Ulama in Politics*, p. 97.

² Dr. Majid A. Khan, 'Tasawwuf ke Haqiqat', *Al-Furqan*, April 1978, pp. 23-28.

³ *Ibid.*

with this is the re-establishment of the stance by Sirhindi that it is *Din*, which is indispensable thing for a Muslim and not mysticism.¹

(f) Impact of *Wahdat al-Shuhud* Philosophy

At the advent of Sirhindi, the philosophy of *wahdat al-wujud* was a dominant theme in mysticism. The philosophy of Ibn al-‘Arabi had been accepted without much reservation and “it influenced the whole of the Islamic society from top to bottom. It affected its normal attitude, it affected its deeds, it affected its aesthetic consciousness, it affected its literature and poetry and it affected its philosophy and outlook.”² But, Sirhindi with expertise in both religious learning and mysticism, not only put *wahdat al-wujud* to severe criticism but also advanced a conception opposed to it. He insisted that his conception (*of wahdat al-shuhud*) was the genuine Islamic conception and was derived from the Revelation of the Prophet. He emphasized that the sufi way is different from the prophetic way. It gave a new turn to Islamic mysticism. “This was a revolution, and his ideas spread far and wide.”³ The thought of Sirhindi, particularly in the field of Islamic mysticism, was bound to have its impact and it agitated the greatest minds of the day as well as the coming generations. The advancement of *wahdat al-shuhud* and trenchant scrutiny of *wahdat al-wujud*, generated a discussion and debate about the latter among the divines and mystics, some substantiating Sirhindi’s view and

¹ Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 48.

² Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

others opposing it. The first important personage who took up the issue, was none other than Shah Wali-Ullah, a divine of very great eminence and a mystic of Naqashbandiya school.

Shah Wali-Ullah's approach towards *wahdat al-wujud* and *wuhdat al-shuhud* was that of synthesis and reconciliation. He believes that there is no substantial difference between the ideas of Ibn al-'Arabi and Sirhindi. They both really mean the same thing and their differences are in reality only verbal. He penned down his view in a small treatise- *Faislat Wahdat-al-Wujud wa al-Shuhud* (Decision on the case of Unityism and Apparentism). According to him, to say that the essence of the contingent beings are the names and attributes (*asma'-o-sifat*) of the necessary being differentiated in the conceptual stage, as Ibn al-'Arabi holds, or to say that the contingent beings are the names and attributes of the necessary being reflected in their opposite non-beings (*a'dam-i-mutaqabila*), as Sirhindi maintains, is practically the same thing.¹ The difference, if any is insignificant. By *wahdat al-shuhud* all that is intended is to throw emphasis on the perfection of the necessary and the imperfection and insignificance of the contingent being. Ibn al-'Arabi too holds that the contingent is insignificant and all perfection belongs to the necessary being.² Thus contends Shah Wali-Ullah that, if we leave simile and metaphor aside, the two doctrines are essentially the same,³ and the

¹ Shah Wali-Ullah, *Faislat Wahdat al-Wujud wa al-Shuhud*, Delhi, p. 26.

² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*

controversy of *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud* is only verbal rather than a real one.¹

The followers of Sirhindi, however, did not accepted the reconciliatory approach of Shah Wali-Ullah, for instance, Khawaja Mir Nasir 'Andalib. According to Khawaja Mir Nasir, objectively *wahadat al-wujud* is absolutely invalid; it is not the truth about reality. Objectively *wahdat-al-shuhud* alone is valid. But speaking subjectively, i.e. in their bearing on the *Salik*, mystic and his spiritual growth, both the doctrines are directed to the same end, viz., to dissociate him from things other than Allah (*ma-siwa-Allah*).² Kawaja Mir Dard, the son of Kawaja Mir Nasir, also holds that objectively *wahdat al-wujud* is false, but subjectively *wahadat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud* both bring about the same result, viz., liberation of the *qalb* or soul from the bondage of things other than Allah. Hence if a mystic realizes either of the two states, or both of them, that makes no difference.³ In fact both are the development of later times and neither of these doctrines descend from the Prophet.⁴ However, the doctrine of *wahadat al-shuhud* primarily abides by the Qur'an and Hadith and only secondarily by reason, while as in case of *wahdat al-wujud* it is vice-versa.⁵

A direct reaction to Wali-Ullah's effort, to show that Sirhindi's philosophy is essentially the same as that of Ibn al-'Arabi, came

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

² Kawaja Mir Nasir, *Nala'-i-'Andalib*, quoted by Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

³ Kawaja Mir Dard, *Ilm al-Kitab*, quoted by Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

from Shah Gulam 'Ali Yahya (d. 1190/ 1776), a disciple of Mirza Mazhar Jani-Janan (d. 1195/ 1780), the chief leader of the Mujaddidis of his time. A scholar of great eminence, Gulam Yahya expressed his views in his treatise, *Kalimat al-Haqq* (The Word of Truth). Gulam Yahya emphatically maintains that Wali-Ullah is wrong in holding that there is no difference between the two doctrines. Indeed there can be no reconciliation between the two doctrines.¹ Explaining the difference between the two, Gulam Yahya says that, *wahdat al-wujud* is based on complete identity of the created and the Creator, while *wahdat al-shuhud* is grounded in the absolute difference between the two (created and Creator).² According to *wahdat-al-wujud*, says Gulam Yahya, the essence of the contingent being are *A'yan-i-thabita*, i.e., the determinations of *Asma'-o-Sifat* of Allah.³ But, according to *wahdat al-shuhud*, the essence of contingent beings are the *azlal* (adumbrations) which *Asma'-o-sifat* have cast in their opposed non-beings ('adam-i-mutaqabila).⁴ Again, according to the *wahadat al-wujud* change enters in the being of God itself, for it is He who modifies himself and becomes the contingent world.⁵ But according to *waḥdat al-shahud* the creation of the world brings no change in the being of God. Gulam Yahya, also objects to the Wali-Ullah's reconciliatory approach, as the latter does not ground his

¹ Gulam Yahya, *Kalimat al-Haqq*, quoted by Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 160-61.

arguments on mystic experience (*kashf*).¹ Mazhar Jan-i-Janan also supports the viewpoint of his disciple and wrote a Foreword to *Kalimat al-Haqq*.

The *Kalimat al-Haqq* of Gulam Yahya, provoked a furious refutation when Shah Rafi al-Din (d. 1247/ 1833), younger son of Shah Wali-Ullah, wrote a voluminous book under the title *Damagh al-Batil* (Destruction of Untruth). Shah Rafi al-Din defends his father's argument that the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* is true, in conformity with Islam, and most of the prominent mystics have upheld it.² *Wahdat al-shuhud* on the other hand is a new doctrine, but not altogether different from *wahdat al-wujud*, as misunderstood by Sirhindi.³ He, therefore, recommends that *wahdat al-wujud* should be accepted as the basic doctrine and *wahdat al-shuhud* should be interpreted accordingly, as done by Shah Wali-Ullah.⁴

Shah Sayyid Ahmad Barailwi, on the basis of direct mystic experience (*kashf-o-shuhud*) also contributed to the debate (of *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud*). In his book *Sirat al-Mustaqim*, he explains that when love dominates the mystic, the yearning for nearness (*Taqarrub*) and communion with God grows more and more intense in his soul. This state gradually overpowers him. Sayyid Barailwi explains this state by comparing it with a piece of iron, which is thrown into the furnace and fire permeates into its very being and to such an extent that it

¹ *Ibid.*

² Shah Rafi al-Din, *Damagh al-Batil*, quoted by Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁴ *Ibid.*,

acquires all the characteristics of fire. Even its appearance becomes that of fire. One could affirm of it all that could be affirmed of fire. While in this condition, the piece of iron would, if it could speak, claim that it was fire itself. However, the fact remains that it has not become fire; it is still iron as it was before. In the same manner when love of God takes hold of his being, he is completely overpowered by it.¹ But, afterwards if he rises to a higher stage, the mystic is blessed with another experience. He feels infinite expansion. He realizes, that 'every thing else has thereby ceased to be' is a mistaken notion and indeed it is absurd.² In short, to Sayyid Ahmad *wahdat al-wujud* is subjective and not objective experience. That is, thereby, everything does not become God.³ Infact he opposes *wahdat al-wujud* and regards it as one of the innovations (*bid'at*) of the pantheistic heretics.

Shah Isma'il Shaheed, who was a follower of Sayyid Ahmad Barailwe, also upholds his master's view and maintains transcendental view of God. He described his view, in his book- '*Abaqat*.

The scrutiny of *wahdat al-wujud* by Sirhindi, has attracted the attention of modern scholars too, and there are both adversaries and protagonists of it. Many contemporary scholars uphold reconciliatory approach towards the two doctrines. Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi,⁵ Dr. Mir

¹ Shah Sayyid Ahmad Barailwi, *Sirat al-Mustaqim*, pp. 12, 13.

² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 12, 13

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁵ Vide, Prof. Muhammad Sarwar, *Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi*, Lahore, 1923, pp. 153-154

Vali-ud-Din¹, Prof. Muhammad Sarwar,² Sabah al-Din Abdul Rehman,³ and Prof. Zia al-Hasan Faruqi,⁴ uphold this approach (of reconciliation). But ‘Abdul Haq Ansari, a reputed scholar of our times, maintains that the doctrine of *wahdat al-shuhud* of Sirhindi, is fundamentally different from that of *wahdat al-wujud* of Ibn al-‘Arabi.⁵

(g) Sirhindi’s Disciples and Their Role in the Development of His Thought

A tree is known by its fruits, as a teacher is known by his taught, so is the case with a *Sheikh* and his disciple. The disciples are the mirror of their mentors. They reflect his (mentor’s) ability, profundity, the depth of his thought, and volume of his influential personality. It is the endeavours of the disciples, who as a viable tool, take forward the message of their mentor, and disseminate it far and wide.

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, as one of his conscious endeavours, navigated a band of disciples, belonging to the different parts of India. He instructed them, supervised their progress, until they attained a level of perfection. Having been trained both in the fields of the *shari‘ah* and *tariqa*, Sirhindi send his disciples to different parts of the country, also

¹ Vide Mir Vali al-Din, “Reconciliation between Ibn al-Arabi’s *Wahadat al-Wujud* and Mujaddid’s *Wahadat al-Shuhud*.”, *Islamic Culture*, XXV, 1951, pp. 43-51.

² Prof. M. Sarwar, ‘*Muqadima*’, to Urdu translation of *Fuyud al-Harmain*, Lahore, 1947, pp. 20-22.

³ Sayyid Sabah al-Din ‘Abdul Rehman, *Bazm-i-Sufiyah*, Azamgarh, 1984, pp. 719-720.

⁴ Zia al-Hasan Faruqi, *Islam Mein Rasikh al-A’tiqadi: Beech ke Rah*, Delhi, 1991, p. 39.

⁵ Ansari, *op. cit.*, Chapter IV, pp. 101-117.

outside it. They became instrumental in propagating the ideas of Sirhindi far and wide and consequently of the Naqashbandi *silsila* too.

The number of disciples of Sirhindi runs in thousands,¹ the description of whom is outside the scope of this work. However, we will limit our description to his sons and prominent disciples, who are not only the embodiment of Sirhindi's teachings, but also played a pivotal role in spreading the thought of Sirhindi.

Sons of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

It is said about Sirhindi that he produced two wonders, one, his *Maktubat*, and other his sons.² Sirhindi was blessed with seven children of whom three-Muhammad Farrukh, Muhammad 'Isa, and daughter Umm-i-Kulthum, died at tender age.³ The eldest son Khawaja Muhammad Sadiq died at the young age of twenty five (in 1025/1616), after completing his formal education and fathoming the secrets of mysticism.⁴ Sirhindi held him in high esteem and once said about him, that, "this dear son of mine is an agglomeration of this medicant's mystical cognitions and a scripture of his stage of devotion and attraction."⁵

Khawaja Muhammad Sa'id (1005/1597-1070/1660), the second son of Sirhindi, was brought up in an atmosphere of reverence for

¹ For the detailed description of the disciples of Sirhindi, see Nu'mani, *op. cit.*, pp. 310-351; Nadwi, *op. cit.*, pp. 370-371; Zawar Husain, *op. cit.*, pp. 724-800; and Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-391.

² *Ibid.* (Badr al-Din Sirhindi), p. 275; Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 331.

³ *Ibid.* (Badr al-Din Sirhindi), p. 275.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-213.

⁵ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 277.

Khawaja Baqi Bilah and of discourses on mysticism. It is said that when only just seventeen or eighteen he had acquired all the subtleties of the prevalent *Ma'qul* and *Manqul* disciplines and began to participate actively in religious debates.¹ He had mastery over *Fiqh*. He has written about hundred *Maktubat*², nine of which are addressed to Awrangzeb.³

Khawaja Muhammad Sa'id is said to have often visited Shahjahan's court. According to Badr al-Din, Shahjahan would never refer the questions of law in his presence to any other 'Alim.⁴ He was in good relation with Awrangzeb and the latter held him in esteem, and once a gift of three hundred *Asharfis* was awarded to him and his younger brother Sheikh Muhammad Ma'sum.⁵ He visited Awrangzeb in the fourth year of his reign (1661-62), on the latter's request.⁶ According to the author of *Mirat-i-Jahan Numa*, Muhammad Baqa, "the Emperor had complete faith and perfect devotion to him. He visited him in the fourth regnal year at his request and was accorded great honour and respect. Through his recommendation a large number of needy received *Madad-i-Ma'ash*".⁷ This manifests the influence of the Naqashbandi saints over the Mughal rulers. Kwaja Muhammad Sa'id took an active part in propagating the mystic order of his father, and guided seekers, after the path of spirit.⁸

¹ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

² They were published in Lahore, in 1966, under the title *Maktubat-i-Sa'idiya*

³ Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 334.

⁴ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-15.

⁵ Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India*, p. 380.

⁶ Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 336

⁷ Quoted by Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India*, p. 381.

⁸ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 215

Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum (1007/1599-1079/1668-69), the third son of Sirhindi, and second *Qayyum*, lived to become the most renowned spiritual successor of his father.¹ A profound sage and leader of the learned, Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum was dearly beloved son of Sirhindi, who educated him with great care and was greatly impressed with his precocity. He was *hafiz-i-Qur'ran* and used to teach *Tafseer Baidawi*, *Mishkat*, *Hidayah* and '*Azodi* to his disciples.² It is said that he was fully acquainted with all the subtle secrets of divine knowledge and gnosis which were laid down in the letters of his father.³

Awrangzeb is said to have taken oath of fealty to him and was guided in the mystical discipline by his son Khawaja Saif al-Din.⁴ Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum refers to Aurangzeb in his letters as the 'Defender-Prince of Faith'.⁵ Aurangzeb cherished not only Khawaja Ma'sum but whole of the Sirhindi's progeny.⁶

Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum was responsible for spread and guiding thousands of disciples in the Mujaddidiya order. The number of persons who took oath of allegiance to him is stated to be nine hundred thousand of which seven thousand qualified as his spiritual descendents.⁷

¹ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

² Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

³ Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India*, p. 382.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

⁵ Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, pp. 336-337.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 337

⁷ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 373.

Of these one was Sheikh Habib-Ullah Bukhari who rose to the position of most revered mystic Sheikh of his time in Khurasan and Transoxiana, spread the light of Sunna in Bukhara and surrounding lands and guided thousands of disciples in spiritual perfection.¹ His another Khalifa Sheikh Murad is said to have settled in Syria who attained great fame and popularized *silsilah* Mujaddidiya Naqashbandiya there.² His Khulafa' are also said to have settled in Kabul, Peshawar, and Nangarhar.³ His famous cloister of Mujaddidiya mystics at Delhi was graced by Khawaja Saif al-Din, Mirza Mazhar Jani-Janan, Shah Gulam 'Ali and Shah Ahmad Sa'id. It was the seminary where Maulana Khalid Rumi got the training of spiritual perfection at the feet of Shah Gulam 'Ali, and then spread its message abroad throughout 'Iraq, Syria, Kurdistan and Turkey.⁴

Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum has written a number of letters, which have been compiled in three volumes.⁵ They provide a commentary on the *Maktubat* of his father and explain intricate issues of mystical experience. They are valued for depth and richness in thought. The youngest son of Sirhindi was Sheikh Muhammad Yahya (1024/1614-1095/1685).⁶

¹ *Ibid.*

² Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 337.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

⁵ Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 337.

⁶ He received both a '*Aqli* and '*Naqli* education from his elder brother. He learnt *Mawatta* from Sheikh 'Abdul Haq Muhadith. (Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 338) and completed his formal education at the age of twenty. He was married to grand-daughter of Baqi Billah. He is said to have written books and build a grand mosque in Sirhind. (*Ibid.*)

Prominent Deputies of Sirhindi

Among the most important deputies of Sirhindi, who by some Naqashbandis is regarded even superior to his sons, was Sayyid Adam Binnauri.¹ He was originally initiated into the Naqashbandiya order at Multan by Haji Khizar Khan, a disciple of Sirhindi who lived in Bahlulpur in the vicinity of Sirhind, but Adam was subsequently recommended by him to Sirhindi for further training.²

Sayyid Adam attained the sublime state of spiritual elevation hardly encompassed by his contemporary mystics. He was instrumental in initiating innumerable persons. One lakh persons are reported to have taken oath of allegiance to him, of which one thousand were guided to attain the spiritual insight.³ At least one thousand seekers used to be present everyday in his cloister.⁴ His discipleship spread to Afghanistan, Lahore, Kohat and Peshawar.⁵

Being a man of distinguished spiritual insight, Sayyid Binnauri's own way came to be recognised as a distinctive school known by the name of *Ihsaniyah* order. Though himself unlettered, the order claimed the allegiance of the most eminent scholars and savants like Shah Wali-Ullah, his son Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz, Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed, and the

¹ He was born in Binaur near Sirhind. His paternal ancestors were Sayyids and maternal ones Afghans.

² Nadwi, *op. cit.*, pp. 374-375; Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 340.

³ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

⁴ Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 340.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

companions of the latter like Mualana Isma'il Shaheed and Shah Ishaq.¹ Muhammad Qasim Nanautwi, Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi—the founder of *Dar al-'Uloom* Deoband, also were initiated in the *Ihsaniya* order.² Shah Wali-Ullah in his *Anfas al-'Arifeen*, has paid glowing tributes to him for his insight into the spiritual truth, and regards him as one of the founders of mystical order.³

Sayyid Binnauri is credited with a number of works. He compiled the teachings of his preceptor and salient features of Naqashbandiya doctrines in *Kalimat al-Ma'arif*.⁴ *Nukat al-Asrar* his other work, is about the essence of Sirhindi's teachings.⁵ He is claimed to attach no significance to miracle mongering and supernatural feats.⁶ He is also famous for his meticulous adherence to the Sunnah and avoidance of *Bid'a*.⁷

Mir Muhammad Nu'man⁸ and Khawaja Hashim Kishmi are two other important disciples of Sirhindi. Having attained the spiritual elevation under Sirhindi, the former was sent to Burhanpur, for the

¹ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

² *Ibid.*

³ Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 341

⁴ Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India*, p. 385.

⁵ Ikram, *Rud-i-Kauthar*, p. 341

⁶ Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India*, p. 385.

⁷ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

⁸ Born in 977 AH in Samarqand and died in 1058. After having his early association with Amir 'Abdullah Balkh 'Ishqi in Balkh, he came to India and was initiated in the Naqashbandi silsilah by Baqi Billah, who in turn put him under the discipleship of Sirhindi. (Nu'mani, *op. cit.*, pp. 318-319).

propagation of Naqashbandiya order there. He was successful in enlisting a number of persons under his influence.¹ According to Badr al-Din, his discipleship increased to the extent that Jahangir was informed by the adversaries of Nu'man, that there was a threat of rebellion from a *darvesh* in Burhanpur, the number of whose disciples is one lakh.² His scholarship and his close association with and appreciation by Sirhindi can be gauged from the fact that most number of the *Muktubat Imam Rabbani* are addressed to him.³ He also guided Khawaja Muhammad hashim Kishmi in his spiritual pursuits.⁴

Khawaja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, born in Kishm (Badekhshan), came to India and remained in the supervision of Sirhindi for two years.⁵ Having completed his education in *tariqat*, he was also sent to Burhanpur by Sirhindi, for propagation. He is author of *Zubdat al-Maqamat*, the most authentic work on the life of Sirhindi and his Khulafa'.⁶ He also compiled third volume of *Maktubat Imam Rabbani*.⁷ He was also a poet, and Badr al-Din has given some portion of his poetry in *Hadhrat al-Quds*.⁸ Sirhindi held him in high esteem and at par with his

¹ S.M.Ikram says he was not a great success in Burhanpur.

² Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

³ See Sirhindi, *Muktubat*, Vol. I, Letters 119,120,121, 161, 173, 204, 209, 224, 228, 231, 238, 246, 257, 281, 312; Vol. II, 4, 92, 99; Vol. III, 1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 19, 21, 26, 30, 36, 49, 102.

⁴ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

⁶ Nu'mani, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

⁷ Badr al-Din Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 358-362.

two sons Khawaja Muhammad Sa'id and Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum.¹
A good number of letters are addressed to him by Sirhindi.²

In the following pages, we will briefly describe the other eminent mystics particularly those associated with Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum, which will indicate their popularity and the development and reception of Sirhindi's thought on the future generation of Muslims.

Khawaja Saif al-Din (1049-1096/1639-16-85), the eldest son and spiritual successor of Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum, achieved a great success in realizing the reformist ends of Sirhindi, by renewed insistence on following the Sunnah and avoiding innovations.³ He established a famous cloister at Delhi which was later developed into an international centre of guidance and devotional exercises by Mirza Mazhar Jan Janan and Shah Ghulam 'Ali, disseminating spirituality to Afghanistan, Turkistan, Iraq, Syria etc.

Awrangzeb was imparted spiritual training by Khawaja Saif al-Din, the details of which have been described elsewhere.⁵ The Khawaja was very popular, commanding the lawful (*Ma'ruf*) and forbidding the unlawful (*Munkir*). He was so successful that according to the author of *Zail-ur-Rushahat*, 'he had almost uprooted the blameworthy innovations

¹ Vide Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. III, Letter No. 82.

² See *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter Nos. 290, 310, 313; Vol. II, 74, 93, 97; Vol. III, 42, 52, 68, 75, 90, 92, 96.

³ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Infra*, p. 229-230

from the country. He was so popular that over fourteen hundred people visited him daily.¹

Khawaja Muhammad Zubair (d. 1115/1738), the grandson of Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum and successor of Khawaja Muhammad Naqashband, (son of Khawaja Ma'sum and third *Qayyum*), achieved such a universal popularity, that the path he took from his house to mosque was covered with turbans and wraps by the nobles and grandees so that he may not have to step down on the bare ground.² He had many noted successors. One of them was Mualana Fazlur Rehman Ganj-Moradabadi (1208-1313/1794-1895). He for his spiritual magnetism, rigorous discipline in following the shari'ah, and deep knowledge of Sunnah was source of spiritual guidance to the people in North India. Most of the founders and directors of *Nadwat al-'Ulama* are said to have been spiritually attached to him.³

Mirza Mazhar Jan Janan (1111-1195/1699-1781) played a key role in Delhi in flourishing of the Mujaddidya *silsilsh*. About him Shah Wali-Ullah writes that, "there was no profound sage so conscientious in following the path of holy law delivered by the Prophet, no spiritual mentor so successful in guiding the people on the path of spirit and no mystic so strong in divinity, in his contemporary age in India, Arabia or Afghanistan".⁴ Shah Ghulam 'Ali of Batalah (1156-1240/1743-1825) the

¹ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 379.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 378-380.

⁴ *Ibid.*

most worthy successor of Jan Janan, was a man of great spiritual perfection with world-wide fame. There was hardly any city in India where he did not have a few disciples.¹ in Ambala alone, he had fifty disciples. His cloister is said to have been attended by the people from Rom (Turkey), Syria, Baghdad, Egypt, China and Ethopia.² At least five hundred people lived within the cloister.³ In the cloister disciples from Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkant, Hisar, Qandhar, Kabul, Peshawar, Kashmir, Multan, Lahore, Sirhind, Rampur, Barailly, Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Dacca, Hyderabad, also have been reported.⁴ The role and success of Sirhindi's Khulufa and the rapid progress of the Mujaddidya order can be well-inferred from the world-wide discipleship of Shah Gulam 'Ali.

Maulana Khalid Rumi, the disciple of Shah Ghulam 'Ali was responsible for the propagation and popularity of the Mujaddidya order in the Middle East. "In all the domains of Rum (Turkey), Arabia, Hijaz, Iraq and certain non-Arab countries including whole Kurdistan, the *silsila* of Naqashbandiya order has been received as a greedily desired object. One can see young and old, in every gathering and concourse, mosque and madrasa, keenly discussing the merits of Imam Rabbani Mujaddid Alf Thani."⁵

¹ Nu'mani, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

² Sir Syed Amad Khan, *Athar-i-Sanadid*, Chapter IV.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

⁵ Adbul Shakoor Faruqi, "Imam Rabbani", *Al-Furqan-Mujaddid Alf Thani* Number, 1961.

Allama Shami, the author of *Radd ul-Mukhtar-Sharh al-Durr al-Mukhtar*, was a devoted disciple of Khalid Rumi.¹

Shah Ahmad Sa'id (1217-1277/1802-1861), the chief successor of Shah Ghulam 'Ali, became the nucleus for the further popularity of the *silsilah*. After serving in the cloister of Shah Ghulam 'Ali for about twenty three years, he has to leave India during the uprising of 1857, and settled in Madina, where hundred of Arabs and Turks pledged fealty to him.² Another noted mystic of the Mujaddidiya order during this period was Shah Imam 'Ali Makanwi (1212-1282/1797-1865) whose popularity attracted devotees in such a large number that three hundred goats were slaughtered every day for preparation of repast to feed his guests. Shah Muhammad Mazhar (1248-1301/1832-1884), second son of Shah Ahmad Sa'id was a perfect mystic and is credited with constructing a three storeyed cloister, known as Rabat Mazhari at Madina, in 1290/1873.³ Shah Abdul Gani (1235-1296/1820-1879), the younger brother of Shah Ahmad Sa'id, was also a man of great spirituality. He had the credit of producing such scholars as Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanatwi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, the founders of great educational institutions of Deaband and Mazahir al-'Uloom of Saharanpur, respectively.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*

² Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 390.

The fourth and fifth generation of descendents of Sirhindi, left Sirhind for different parts of Islamic world, to propagate the Mujaddidya order on a wider scale. One branch of his house settled down in Kabul and spread Islam there.¹ Another branch settled in Hyderabad, Sind.

Hafiz Sayyid ‘Abdullah Akbarabadi, spiritual successor of Sayyid Adam Binauri, popularized his Sheikh’s order (*Ihsaniya*). He had among his disciples Shah ‘Abdul Rahim Faruqi (d. 1113/1719), father of Shah Wali-Ullah.² The *Ihsaniya* order was later propagated on wider scale through the efforts of Shah Wali-Ullah and his son Shah ‘Abdul ‘Aziz. The order brought under its fold, the important personalities like Maulana Ashraf ‘Ali Thanawi, Sayyid Husain Ahmad Madeni, and Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, the founder of Tablighi movement in India.³

Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed also belonged to the *Ihsaniya-Mujaddidya silsila*. He carried on the Sirhindi’s mission. He denounced the abuses that had crept into the faith and practice of Islam and soon gathered around him many disciples who hailed him as another *Mujaddid*.⁴ Among the achievements of the Sayyid, it has been written that ‘more than forty thousand Hindus and other non-Muslims embraced Islam through his efforts and three million Muslims pledged allegiance to him.’⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

² *Ibid.*, p. 395.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

⁴ Yasin, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁵ Maulvi Muhammad Ja’far, *Sawaneh Ahmadi*, p. 64.

He was also responsible for the initiation of the founders of Deoband school and a band of people of Sadiqpur (the biggest center of Sayyid's Jihad Movement) in his *silsilah*. The first group contributed to the cause of Islam in India by establishing academic institutions and second group struggled against foreign influences alien to the spirit and teachings of Islam.¹ All the achievements assign a hounoured place to the Sayyid among the series of Mujaddids of Islam in India, which ends with him.²

II. IMPACT OF SIRHINDI ON THE MUGHAL POLITY AND STATE-CRAFT

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, was not merely a reformer in the common sense of the word, but a *mujaddid* with a definite mission and higher ideas, the objective that he himself claimed. 'I have not been created', he said, 'for the spiritual direction of the people and their self-perfection. The purpose of my creation is different, and I have a different mission.'³ He considered himself to be more than a *wali*, a renovator (*mujaddid*) of religion, who had commissioned to Islam at the turn of its second millennium.⁴

(a) Sirhindi and Jehangir

As a part of his multifarious mission, Sirhindi made a conscious effort to get the Shari'ah rules implemented in the Mughal Empire. And when Jehangir ascended the throne, he saw it as ripe time to accomplish the task. He wrote to officials, close to Jehangir, to tell them

¹ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

² Yasin, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

³ Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 6

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I. Letter No. 234 and 261; Vol. II, Letter No. 4; Vol. III, Letter No. 100.

of the plight of Islam and Muslims in the country and impress upon them the need to act promptly. To the Sadr-i-Jahan (d. 1027/1618), who had tutored Jehangir before and enjoyed his confidence as the highest religious authority, he wrote, 'Now that things have changed and the hostility of the people has subsided, it is the duty of the leaders of Islam, the Sadr-i-Islam and the 'ulama', that they work for the implementation of the Sheri'ah."¹ To Khan-i-Jahan (d. 1040/ 16300, another official of the court, he wrote: "Since the king listens to your words and gives them weight, it would be really great if you could explain to him briefly or in detail, as you like, the beliefs of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'a*. Please inform him of the doctrines of the people of the Truth (*Ahl al-Haqq*) and look for every opportunity to talk about Islam and the Muslims, defend the tenets of Islam and condemn infidelity and heresy".²

Sirhindi also wrote letters to high officials in the provinces like, Sheikh Murtada, the governor of Gujrat, Qulich Khan, the devout viceroy of Lahore, Lala Beg, the governor of Bihar, 'Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, the commander-in-chief of Deccan and others and called upon them to spread the teachings of Islam, to defend the faith, to abolish un-Islamic laws, to restore Islamic institutions, and to suppress anti-islamic forces.³

¹ Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 195.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II. Letter No. 67.

³ See *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 65, 53, 195, 165, 163, 269; II, Letter No. 57; Vol. III, Letter No. 54

Sirhindi was imprisoned¹ in 1028/1619 by the orders of Jehangir and set free² a year later. Now the atmosphere had changed and

¹ The imprisonment of Sirhindi is an important episode of his life, therefore, it is worthwhile to discuss it in some detail. The factors of his imprisonment were that, Sirhindi in order to counter the heretic ideas of the Sh'ias and their growing influence on the Mughal Empire, had written several pamphlets to denounce them. They (Shi'as) had therefore, become his enemies and wished to take revenge. (Muhammad Aslam, "Jahangir and Hadhrat Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi", *Journal of Asiatic Society of Pak*, June, 1965, pp. 135-148). They started a campaign against Sirhindi by inciting the Emperor against him, saying that the Sheikh considered himself better than Abu Bakr and showed him a letter of the Sheikh in which he had written the experience of his soul to Khawaja Baqi Billah. (*Ibid.*). The Sheikh had, however, cleared the doubts, raised about the letter. (See Maktub 11 of Vol. I, of Sirhindi). Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan, the celebrated Naqashbandi sufi, says, "the Sheikh had satisfied every one in his letter, leaving no doubt at all, and after that only an illiterate or jealous person could speak against him". Jehangir's grandson, Dara Shikuh, himself regarded this criticism as slander of adversaries of Sheikh. امام معین بہتان است از مخالفان شیخ But Jehangir was influenced in such a way that he summoned the Sheikh and questioned him about his writings.

The contents of *Tuzuk* show that Jehangir himself had no knowledge of the activities and 'place' of Sheikh among the religious reformers, for the Emperor speaks of him in a very impolite way. (Jehangir, *op. cit.*, pp. 272-273). He satisfied the Emperor by explaining that he never considered himself better than a dog; how could he think himself better than Abu Bakr? (Muhammad Ihsan-Allah, *Swaneh 'Umari Hadhrat Mujaddid Alf-Thani*, Rampore, 1926, p. 88). When the Sh'ia noticed that the Sheikh had satisfied the emperor on the first issue, they told him that the Sheikh had not prostrated himself before him, and that he had a number of followers, prepared to rebel against him (Aslam, *op. cit.*, p. 138). Moreover, Asif Khan, the prime minister of Jehangir, himself a dogmatic Sh'ia, advised the Emperor to stop the soldiers from visiting the Sheikh and his Khalifs and taking vows, and even to imprison him (Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 24). Jehangir, who according to Dara Shikoh, was against the darveshes, ordered to imprison the Sheikh in Gwalior Fort. (Jehangir *op. cit.*, pp. 272-273).

² Sirhindi continued his mission in prison where he started preaching among the non-Muslim prisoners, a large number of whom were converted to Islam. The Sheikh used to say that God had sent him to prison only for this purpose. (T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, London, 1913, p. 142). Now, the influence of the Sheikh was not only felt inside prison but in the entire realm, and when the Emperor witnessed the sincerity and enthusiasm of the Sheikh, he not only set him free but sent his son Shahjahan to bring him to the court (Sa'id Ahmad Akbarabadi, *Musalmanun Ka 'Urujo-Zawal*, Delhi, 1947, pp. 305-306). Jehangir granted him a robe of honour and a considerable sum of money. (Jehangir, *op. cit.*, p. 308), and 'himself became his admirer'. (Mufti Ghulam Sarwar, *Khazinatal-Asfiya*, Vol. I. Kanpur, 1902, p. 613). Rizvi, contests the view by saying that it is an exaggeration of Naqashbandi historical Sources. (see Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India*, p. 397ff)

his endeavour had started yielding fruit. Jehangir had been influenced by Sirhindi's sincerity and devotion to Islam to the extent that the Emperor set him free on the condition that he would keep him company.¹ Thus after his release, the Sheikh was given an audience by the Emperor and there he placed the following demands before him: (i) that *Sajidah* before the emperor should be abolished; (ii) the permission to slaughter cows should be given; (iii) the religious innovations should cease; (iv) the office of the *Qadi* and the department of *Ihtisab* should be restored; and that the mosques in need of repair should be renovated and those which had been demolished should be rebuilt.² The emperor granted his demands and issued a royal decree accordingly.³ "Thus after more than a half century's struggle for life and death, Islam came out of its agony and the Muslims heaved a sigh of relief."⁴

After his release from prison Jehangir gave him option to go home or stay with him in the camp.⁵ Sirhindi chose the camp, for it provided him with the unique opportunity to preach to the king and people around him. In various sessions, which he had with Jehangir, he read out the Qur'an to him, explained its message, discussed the principles of faith, and elaborated the rules of the Shari'ah.⁶ This seems to have had its

¹ Ghulam 'Ali Bilgrami, *Subhat al-Mirjan*, no date, p. 79.

² Akbarabadi, *op. cit.*, pp. 305.-6.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Ihsan-Allah, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

⁵ Jehangir, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

⁶ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. III, Letter No. 43, 106, 72.

effect. The Emperor was fully under the Sheikh's influence and the broad-minded Emperor became an orthodox Muslim.¹ Sirhindi proudly used to tell his friends that by the grace of God, the Almighty, the Emperor was a sunni-Hanafi.² Hawkin tells us that he had witnessed the emperor offering the morning prayers.³ Sirhindi was delighted to hear the news from one of his Khalifis, Mir Muhammad Nu'man, that "the reigning Sultan was just and had endeavoured to restore the shariah".⁴ A Hindu writer says that Jehangir was conscious of his duties as a Muslim sovereign,⁵ and "he took greater interest in the future of Islam than his father had done and sometimes he tried to uphold this prestige."⁶

The ever increasing impact of Sirhindi on the body-politic of Mughals can be had from the fact that, on the occasion of conquest of fortress of Kangra by Jehangir, in the sixteenth year of his reign, the idols were broken, a cow slaughtered, the *Adhan* recited, the *Khutba* read, and other rites of Islam observed,⁷ in the presence of Sirhindi.⁸ Jehangir thanked God for allowing him to observe these rites, which none of his

¹ Yasin, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

² Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 15 and 67.

³ *The Hawkins Voyages*, London, 1879, p. 436.

⁴ Sirhindi, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, Letter No. 92.

⁵ M. L. Roy Choudhry, *The State and Religion in Mughal India*, Calcutta, 1951, p. 211.

⁶ Dr. A. L. Srivastava, *The Mughal Empire*, Agra, Second edition, p. 293.

⁷ Jehangir, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

⁸ Sirhindi had been invited by Jehangir himself so that these Islamic rites could be performed.

predecessors had done.¹ In the same year he forbade inter-marriage between Hindu men and Muslim women in Kashmir by a royal decree.² Terry, who visited India between 1616-1619AD, found the mosques full of worshippers.³

Terry further tells us that the Muslims used to keep a rosary in their hands,⁴ and had a great regard for the Qur'an.⁵ They used to keep fasts during the month of *Ramadhan* and observe the 'Id festivals.⁶ The age limit for marriage imposed by Akbar was abolished.⁷ "The Mohamedan confession of faith on the coins was restored by Jehangir."⁸ Stanly Lane Poole adds to the above statement that Jehangir also restored the *hijrah* chronology which his father had abandoned.⁹ The mosques that had been demolished were rebuilt and Arabic and Islamic learning was encouraged.¹⁰

Thus, Sirhindi once again turned India into an Islamic state by winning the Emperor over his side.¹¹ It is narrated that Jehangir used to

¹ Jehangir, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

² *Ibid.*, p. 317.

³ W. Foster, *Early Travels in India*, Oxford, 1921, p. 315.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 316

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 318

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

⁸ M. Elphinstone, *Nurjahan and Jehangir*, Susil Gupta edition, 1950, p. 78.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ M. Aslam, *Sarmayah 'Umar*, Lahore, 1976, pp. 128; Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 169.

¹¹ Sabah al-Din, *Bazm-i-Taimuriya*, Azamgarh ed., p. 168.

say that Sirhindi had promised him that if God should call him to paradise, he would not go alone, but with the Emperor.¹

The mission of re-establishing the authority of Islam in India, initiated by Sirhindi was continued by his sons and khalifis, who under his guidance were trained enough to consolidate his mission.

(b) Sirhindi and Shahjahan

The emergence of Shahjahan (1627-1657) as the Emperor of the Hindustan proved a windfall to Islam in India.² Shahjahan belonged to the Mujaddid's admirers. When Jehangir summoned Sirhindi to his court, Shahjahan apprehended that some trouble might befall Sirhindi on account of his non-observance of the court etiquette which was usual with the staunch upholders of the laws of Islam. He, therefore, sent Afzal Khan and Khawaja 'Abdul Rehman Mufti with some books on *Fiqh*, requesting Sirhindi to perform *sajdah* before the Emperor as prostration before kings is permissible under Muslim law. But, Sirhindi rejected the suggestion, as he would not prostrate himself before anyone except God.³

Shahjahan, who on account of his orthodoxy has been called by some historians, 'faith defending Emperor',⁴ exerted utmost to purify Islam and bring it in accord with the shariah. Historians agree that Shahjahan was kind and benevolent and held the shari'ah in reverence.

¹ *Ibid.*

² Yasin, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

³ Muhammad Ehsan, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-180.

⁴ S. M. Edward and H. Garrett, *Mughal Rule in India*, Delhi, 1995, p. 75.

His personal life was blameless, which he led according to the dictates of the shari'ah.¹ In Shahjahan's reign there was marked departure from Akbar's policy, which is apparent from his several measures that he took towards the restoration of Islamic tenets. "His objectives were", writes Sir Richard Burn, "primarily to restore the strict profession of Islam rather than to persecute believers in other religion." He further says, "thus he soon abolished the ceremonial prostration before the throne which had been instituted by Akbar, and in its place prescribed forms which savoured less of divine worship. The ostentatious use of divine era instituted by Akbar ceased, so far as the record of months on the coinage was concerned, a few years after Shahjahan's accession. Inter-marriage between Hindus and Muslims which had been common in Punjab and Kashmir, was forbidden in 1634".² Thus the tone of administration changed and the liberalism of the day of Akbar was definitely on wane.³ Shahjahan stands midway between Jahangir and Awrangzeb.

(c) Awrangzeb and the Sons of Sirhindi

Aurangzeb (1657-1707) claimed the throne as the champion of orthodox Islam, against the heretical practices and principles of his elder brother Dara Shikoh.⁴ But the orthodoxy and puritan in Awrangzeb was not a sudden outburst or an accident but the logical consequence of the long cultivated reactionary tendencies. "It will not be an exaggeration

¹ Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

² *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. IV, p. 217.

³ Yasin, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

⁴ Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

to say that Awrangzeb's State policy was prompted by the voice of Sirhindi from behind the scene."¹

Awrangzeb had come in contact with Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum, the third son and successor of Sirhindi who continued the mission of his father, during the period of his princehood. According to *Rauzat al-Qayyumiyah*, the prince became a disciple of the Khawaja. Awrangzeb was guided in the mystical journey (*Suluk*) by Khawaja Muhammad Saifuddin, the son of Khawaja Ma'sum, on the instruction of his father. Khawaja Ma'sum was fully conscious of his responsibilities in bringing Awrangzeb in complete accord with the shari'ah and a complete transformation of his heart in favour of Islam. In one of his letters to Khawaja Saifuddin, he states, "This *Darvish*, according to the customs of the *Faqirs*, is not free from attention and prayers (for the success of Saifuddin in his mission). He desires to see the purification of the soul (of Awrangzeb) and (the outward conformity) of his actions (to the laws of Islam)."² Besides, Awrangzeb on his part, maintained a regular correspondence with Khawaja Ma'sum. He consulted him on important points of Muslim theology and sought his advice.³ Khawaja Ma'sum was quite satisfied with the policy of Awrangzeb and gives expression to his feelings in his letters.

¹ Yasin, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

² Khawaja Ma'sum, *Maktubat-i-Ma'sumiya*, Amritsar edition, Letter No. 221.

³ *Ibid.*, Letter Nos., 122 and 127.

⁴ In a letter addressed to the emperor himself, he writes. (This humble Faqir) offers his respect and expresses his gratitude for the glory of Islam and the stability of Islamic principles (which has resulted due to the policy of Awrangzeb). (*Ibid.*, letter No. 6).

Awrangzeb, thus, under the influence of the successors and disciples of Sirhindi, issued in 1659 various ordinances 'to restore the rules of orthodox Islam in the administration and to bring the lives of the people into closer accord with the teachings of the Qur'an. He set the example himself by abolishing the practices, followed by the previous Mughal Emperors, of stamping the *Kalima* (Muslim confession of faith) on his coins, lest the holy words be defiled by the touch of unbelievers. The celebration of Persian festival of *Nauroz* was forbidden; and in the eleventh year of his reign playing of music at court was also forbidden and the state musicians and singers were pensioned off.¹

Awrangzeb's personal and private life was in accord with the shari'ah. He abstained scrupulously from the slightest indulgence in prohibited food, drink or dress and even avoided music. He strove to live up to the ideal of a strict orthodox Muslim. Thereof, Awrangzeb, in the first year of his reign, reiterated the order of his father that his religion forbade him to allow the building of new temples, but did not enjoin the destruction of old ones, as envisaged in the Muslim Canon law.² The teaching and practising of idolatrous forms of worship were stopped under the royal orders.³ In 1679, *jizya* was re-imposed on the unbelievers in order to spread Islam and put down the practice of infidelity.⁴ He

¹ Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

² J. N. Sarkar, *Awrangzeb*, Vol. III, pp. 319-320.

³ Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by His own Historians*, Vol. III, London, p. 184.

⁴ Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

appointed Mulla Iwaz Wajih as *Muhtasib* (censor of morals) for enforcing the prohibitions on the use of *bhang* (hemp), *buza* and other intoxicants and indulgence in lewd practices and adultery.¹

Thus, Sirhindi's thought had far-reaching impact on the body-politic of the Mughal Empire, to the extent that from Akbar upto the rise of Awrangzeb to power, there was a marked change in the religious policy of the Mughals, and rise of Awrangzeb to the throne, 'proved to be the political culmination of the Mujaddidi movement.'²

III. IMPACT ON THE RELIGIOUS LEARNING

According to Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the main channel of mischief were the '*Ulama-i-Su* (worldly minded 'Ulama), who had exclusively taken to *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) as the whole of religious learning. Sirhindi held that "every slackness and irregularity that has taken place in the matters of shari'ah in his age, and every obstruction which has hindered the growth and expansion of Islam, is due to the wickedness of the '*Ulama-i-Su* and the result of their incompetence".³ To safeguard the effectiveness and emphasise the significance of the Hadith and Sunnah, Sirhindi also rejected the very concept of *Bid'at-i-Hasana* (lawful innovations), as to him it tantamounts to rejection of the Sunnah.⁴ Sirhindi, therefore, exhorted the religious divines of Islam to interpret the

¹ Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India*, p. 395.

² Qureshi, '*Ulamain Politics*, p. 98.

³ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 47.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 186.

Qur'an and the Hadith as it has been interpreted and understood by the religious heads of the past and in the light of the precedent set by their own actions.¹ Sirhindi's call thus induced the theologians, those learned in the religious lore to turn to the Hadith.² Sirhindi now turned the tide towards the learning of *Kitab-o-Sunnat*, which was earlier in favour of jurisprudence. People started learning Hadith (Tradition). The trend continued with passage of time and 'Shah Wali-Ullah on his day established the first school of Hadith in India'.³ With Sayyid Ahmad Barailwi, the school turned into *Ahl-i-Hadith* (those who follow only the Hadith and not the school of Islamic Jurists). In its inception the school (of *Ahl-i-Hadith*) had a place in it for mysticism, but with its further development the emphasis fell against *Taqlid* (blind following of the authority of the jurists) and there arose *Ghair Muqallidin* (Traditionists).⁴ The *Ahl al-Hadith* School of thought took its root in India with the followers of Sayyid Ahmad (d. 1246 A.H.) and his lieutenant Shah Isma'il Shaheed (d. 1246 A.H.), and is now a full-fledged school of thought, with a good number of followers.

(IV) IMPACT UPON LATER THINKERS

Sirhindi also influenced the later generation of Muslim thinkers. Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1876-1938), poet-philosopher and "a movement in himself", was greatly influenced by Sirhindi's intellectual and

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol., I, Letter No. 158, 186., 193; Vol. II, Letter No. 23.

² Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

social endeavours. In his early life, Iqbal believed in *wujudi* philosophy of Ibn al-‘Arabi. But after writing his famous poem *Asrari-i-Khudi* (Secrets of Self) in 1912 A.D., he is said to have switched to *Shuhudi* philosophy of Sirhindi. His teacher at Cambridge Mac-Tagret once wrote to Iqbal, after *Asrari-i-Khudi* had been published, that in your early academic life you believed in *Hama Ust* (All is He), now you seem to have changed your stance.¹ In the preface of *The Secrets of the Self*, Nicholson writes, “He (Iqbal) sees that Hindu intellectualism and Islamic pantheism has destroyed the capacity for action. Now, this capacity depends ultimately on the conviction that *Khudi* is real and is not merely an illusion of mind”.² Now the concept of *khudi*, that it is real and is not merely an illusion of mind, cannot be an outcome of philosophy of *wahdat al-wujud*. It is to be mentioned here that between 1911-1914, the *Maktubat* of Sirhindi were published from Amritsar, and Iqbal must have studied them and was thereof influenced by Sirhindi’s thought.³ There were other factors that lead Iqbal towards Sirhindi. Writes Dr. Ghulam Mustafa Khan, “By holding the superiority of *wahdat al-shuhud* over *wahdat al-wujud*, Sirhindi stressed the obedience to the Qur‘an and Hadith. And then Shah Wali-Ullah in his times, tried to make a reconciliation between the two philosophies. These thinkers greatly influenced Sirhindi.”⁴

¹ Sheikh ‘Ata-Ullah, *Makatib-i-Iqbal*, part I, Lahore, p. 24.

² R. A. Nicholson, *The Secrets of the Self*, Lahore, 1944, p. xi, xii

³ Dr. Bashir Ahmad Nahvi, *Masa‘il Tasawwuf awr Iqbal*, Kashmir, 2001, p. 117.

⁴ Ghulam Mustafa Khan, *Adbey Ja‘izay*, Karachi, 1959, p. 105.

The mission—to save Islam from the negative impact of *wahdat al-wujud*, which Sirhindi had started, was continued by Iqbal, when he wrote *Asrari-i-Khudi* and *Rumuz-i-Bikhudu* (Secrets of Selflessness) which had an impact on the Muslim community. In the latter collection of poems he lays emphasis on the life according to the Qur‘an and the Sunnah. “By writing *Asrar-i-Khudi*”, says Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, “Iqbal transformed the political and moral trend of thought in Muslims. He criticized the sufi concept of *Fana* (self-annihilation) and substituted *Khudi* (self affirmation) in its place. He also protested against whadat al-wujud.”¹ At another place he writes, ‘The apparent similarity of thought between Sirhindi and Iqbal is due to the fact that both wanted to change the ideas of people towards Islam, both regarded *kashf* as a means of knowledge; both treated the concepts of wadhat al wujud; union (*itihad*) and incarnation (*halul*) as false; and both consider Prophet Muhammad as a perfect man and a model, to be followed”.²

Sirhindi had propounded that the highest stage for a *salik* is not *wahdat al-wujud* but ‘*‘abdiyyat* (servanthood). At this stage it is manifested to the *salik* that Creator and the creation are absolutely different and that servanthood is the highest stage for a man. Iqbal was highly influenced by this view of Sirhindi and ‘he also upheld that there is no higher stage than the stage of servanthood’.³ And it was on the ground

¹ Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

² Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, ‘Iqbal and Mujaddid Alf Thani’, quoted by Nahvi, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

³ Sayyid Muzafar Husain Barni, *Kuliyat-i Makatib Iqbal*, Vol. I, Delhi, p. 448.

of his (Sirhindi) concept of 'Abdiyat' that Iqbal laid the basis of his concept of *khudi*.¹ Iqbal expresses his inclination towards the stage of servanthood in a couplet-

متاع بے بہا ہے درد سوز آرزو مندی
مقام بندگی دے کر نہ لوں شان خداوندی

In a letter, addressed to Khawaja Hasan Nizami, Iqbal expressly states that he upheld *shuhudi* philosophy.² Referring to the *Maktubat* of Sirhindi, Iqbal writes that *Ghusastan* (lit. broken) is true Islam and *Paiwastan* (union) is renunciation (*Rahbaniyat*) and Persian tasawwuf. In line with this thought, Iqbal prefers to be called *Sirr al-Firaq* and not *Sirr al-Wisal*.³ *Firaq* meaning 'difference', is related to *Shuhudi* philosophy and *wisal* meaning 'meeting point' is the outcome of *wujudi* philosophy.⁴ Iqbal says that the distinction made between the two is, as explicated by Mujaddid himself.⁵

Praising the reformatory efforts of Sirhindi in the field of tasawwuf, Iqbal address him as "a great religious genius of the seventeenth century...., whose fearless analytical criticism of contemporary sufism resulted in the development of new technique".⁶ At other place, Iqbal hails Sirhindi, as "a great reformer of Islamic sufism".⁷

¹ Abu Sa'id Nur al-Din, "Wahdat al-Wujud and Falsafa Khudi", *Iqbal review*, Karachi, July 1962, p. 115.

² Barni, *op. cit.* p.41

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Dr. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Delhi, pp. 192-193.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Dr. Iqbal has also dedicated a poem¹ to Sirhindi, in admiration of the undaunted self-confidence of the great Muslim saint that he demonstrated before the Emperor of the day-Jehangir, and for his role in the revival of Islam in India.

Abdul Hasan Ali Nadwi, the most renowned and reputed scholar of the contemporary Muslim world, was also greatly influenced by Sirhindi. Nadwi belonged to the Mujaddidiya order and has devoted a full volume (iv) of his work, *Tarikh Da'wat wa 'Azimat*, to Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. In the book, which deals with the various aspects of Sirhindi's thought, he is in complete agreement with and corroborates every aspect of his thought. Sayyid 'Uruj Qadri, who has reviewed the book, criticizes Nadwi, for defending Sirhindi on every other issue.² The book manifests the attachment and fidelity of Nadwi with Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi.³

Thus, the multidimensional thought of Sirhindi laid impact on the different section of the Muslim community, both of the past and present.

¹ See Appendix

² 'Uruj Qadri, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-26.

³ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The thought of the great seventeenth century Indian saint, religious reformer and renovator, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi was revivalistic in nature and in consonance with the prevailing conditions of his age. He was born (971/1564) at a time when the Muslims in the sub-continent were passing through a very critical juncture of its history. Every section of Muslim community was affected by aberrations in the religious life. The then Mughal ruler, Akbar had initiated policies which were seriously affecting Muslim life. His belief was that the religion of Prophet had run its course and should be replaced by a new religion, and in fact he launched an eclectic religion of his own making. A section of scholars at the royal court were challenging the fundamentals of Islam. They denied the necessity of prophecy, doubted the utility of the shari'ah and advocated self-sufficiency of reason.

The 'ulama who were supposed to be the guardians of religion were instead using their expertise to justify un-Islamic practices. One 'Alim, for example, who was highest authority on religion in the country issued a *fatwa* saying that the Hajj was no longer incumbent as the journey to Mekka was unsafe.¹ Other 'ulama at Lahore ruled that charging interest was legal.² Still others came out with the verdict that prostration before the king for honour was quite proper.³ Sirhindi expressed the state of 'ulama in the following words: 'the world is drowned in the sea of *bid'at* and delights in its black acts; the 'ulama of our time have become the preachers of *bid'at* and destroyers of the Sunnah."⁴

The sufis, on the other hand, had developed a wrong view of sufism and of its relation with the shari'ah. They believed that the shari'ah was an empty form devoid of reality which they thought lay in their *tariqa* (sufi path). They did not shy away from exalting their *kasf* over the wahy of the Prophet. Influenced by the philosophy of *wahdat al-wujud*, some made no distinction between Islam and *kufr*. They believed that the shari'ah was to attain knowledge and if anyone realized the truth of *wahdat al-wujud*, he need not to abide by the rules of the shari'ah.⁵ Most sufis held musical sessions (*sama'*), indulged in spiritual dances (*raqs*) and cared more for *dhikr* and *fikr* (contemplation) than *farayid* and

¹ Nu 'mani, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

² Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, Letter No. 102.

³ Nu'mani, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

⁴ Sirhindi, *Maktubat*, Vol. II, Letter No. 54.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Letter No. 276.

Sunnah. The common Muslim masses due to their contact with polytheistic religion and culture of India, and under the guidance of ignorant sufis, indulged in *shirk* and alien practices to Islam (*Bid'ah*). Muslims participated in the religious rites of non-Muslims, prayed to their idols and gods and participated in Hindu festivals.¹ They made votive offerings (*nadhr*) to saints and offered sacrifices on their graves. In short, there was a general decline in the cross-section of Muslim society, both at the level of mind and heart.

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi being well aware of the conditions and circumstances he was living in, elaborated the various aspects of his thought accordingly. For an essentially just estimate of his thought, one must consider him with reference of his times.² His thought emanates from the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the sane sufi experience.

About the concept of God, Sirhindi upheld the primacy of Divine transcendence. To him God is One, Absolute, and nothing resembles Him. He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden. He comprehends everything and He is with everyone and everywhere, and that He is closer to us than our Juglar vein. God is the Creator of earth, and heavens, mountains and oceans, vegetables and animals, as well as of human beings with all their potentialities.³ He commands extreme reverence, perfect worship, absolute submission, and unqualified love. He

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Letter No. 41.

² Sharif, *op. cit.*, p. 882.

³ Burhan Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

is the only Divine Being. There is no one else who possesses the same *Sifat* (attributes), and He alone deserves '*Ibadat* or worship.

To Sirhindi, world is separate from God. Nothing in the world participates in God's essence, attribution, power and authority. God exists by Himself; the world exists by Him. He is Infinite, Eternal, and Everlasting and nothing shares in any of these attributes. The relation between God and world is that of Creator and created, and not of identity or union (*itihad*). According to Sirhindi, God has created Man and his ideas, will, action and feelings but the men are themselves responsible for their beliefs, actions and attitudes as He has given them power and freedom.

Explaining the perimeters of the shari'ah, Sirhindi emphasise that it is all comprehensive, embracing all the realities of this world and the next. There are no realities outside the shari'ah and the sufi *tariqah* is only a further help to attain those realities. Reasserting the importance of Prophethood, Sirhindi writes that the Prophets are acme of spiritual perfection among the entire creation of God. The Prophethood is superior to sainthood, as the former's source of guidance is *wahy*, which is an authentic source, while as the latter depends on *kashf wa ilham*, which are subjective experiences. Among the Muslim sects, Sirhindi holds that ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama' is the righteous group and rejects the Shi'a theology. It may be mentioned here that, somewhat rigid approach of Sirhindi towards Shi'as does not seem to fit in line with a conscious *mujaddid*, who though claiming to be a renovator of the second

millennium of the *Ummah*, did not tried a reconciliatory approach in taking along this important and major sect of Muslim community.

Sirhindi was a sufi but he did not think sufism as the sole aim of the life. For him it was merely a means to an end, the end being complete and unconditional adherence and fidelity to the Qur'an and the Sunnah.¹ His sufi thought, therefore, makes a distinction between the Prophetic way and saintly way of God and judges the latter in the light of the former. Reviewing the history of sufism, he explained what ideas and practices are within the bounds of the shari'ah and what must be condemned as aberrations. Consequently he subjected philosophy of *wahdat al-wujud* to searching criticism, and censured its consequences to Islamic beliefs, values and practices. He based his criticism on mystic experience and upheld that *wahdat al-wujud* is a lower stage in mystic's evolution. But when the mystic outgrows this stage, he realizes that it is a subjective experience and *wahdat* that he experienced was merely *shuhud* (appearance). To Sirhindi, shari'ah is superior to *tariqa*. Tasawwuf is essentially a *tariqah* to purify oneself, to attain strong conviction in the truths of the Prophet's Revelation and to obey commands of the shari'ah. It is a way to be the most honest and sincere servant of God and not a persuit of mystery. No *wali* is independent of the Prophet, nor equal to him. His experience is subject to the Revelation of the Prophet.

Sirhindi's impact was multiferous. In the field of sufism, a yearning started to purify it from external influences and to bring it in

¹ Sharif, *op. cit.*, p. 882.

close conformity with the commands of shari'ah. The *Mujaddidiya-Naqashbandiya* and *Muhammadiya* Orders emerged and laid greater stress on the adherence to the Sunnah. Sirhindi's thought influenced thinkers of the succeeding generations like Shah Wali-Ullah, Sayyid Ahmad Barailwi and Shah Isma'il. Sirhindi by means of a network of trained disciples throughout India, was instrumental not only for the spread of *Naqashbandiya silsila* but also for injecting a renewed life in the body-politic of Islam. Through disciples, Sirhind's influence spread from Indonesia to Turkey and from there to many *silsilas* of Africa.¹ Sirhindi had a definite impact on the Mughal polity and state-craft. In the reigns of Jehangir and Shahjahan, the orthodoxy reached to a place of partnership in the Empire. His political impact reached to its climax, when Awrangzeb ascended the throne. Sirhindi's endeavour in the field of religious learning lead to the revival of Hadith learning. His thought influenced the contemporary generation of Muslim thinkers and divines too. Dr. Iqbal and Sayyid Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi are such examples.

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, recorded his ideas not merely from a point of view of an academician, but with a conscious mission of realizing them, and for bringing about a change in the Muslim society. His mission was to criticize unbelief, heresy and false doctrines, and reaffirm faith in prophecy and the revelation of the Prophet. It was to condemn disobedience and innovation, revive virtue, piety and adherence to the Sunnah, and to oppose anti-islamic forces and powers and restore

¹ Qureshi, *'Ulama in Politics*, pp. 97-8.

institutions and laws. Sirhindi used all his powers of mind and heart to achieve these ends. He through his writings attacked the erroneous ideas and practices of every section of society-masses, scholars, sufis and statesmen, explained what is true faith and right piety and defended them on the grounds of the Qur'an and Sunnah, reason and sane sufi practices. He wrote letters to important personalities in every walk of life, in colleges (*madrasahs*), Cloisters (*Khanqahs*), army and government, urging them to reform the views and practices of the people under their influence and to realize the great responsibility which god has placed on their shoulders in this regard. He sent to them his emissaries, and traveled to see them personally when he considered it helpful. He used the network of his disciples, spread throughout India and outside it, to urge people to give up false beliefs and evil innovations, to follow the shari'ah and adhere to the Sunnah of the Prophet. He had several copies of his letters made and distributed among the people. In this mission, Sirhindi was successful to a great extent in bringing about a change in the cross-section of the society and it was for these accomplishments that Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi has been acclaimed as the *Mujaddid Alf Thani* (the Renewer of Islam on the Head of the second thousand of the Islamic Era), by the succeeding generation of Muslims.

No researcher can perhaps claim to have perfected the subject he deals with. And when one is concerned with the encyclopaedic knowledge of Sirhindi, embodied particularly in 536 *Maktubat*, there can be no exception to the rule. In the dissertation we have dealt with some

aspects of his thought and there are left other aspects to be discovered and analysed. For instance, a comparative study can be made about the *modus operandi* of the revivalist movement that Sirhindi lead so successfully and its relevance viz-a-viz the contemporary Islamic Movements. Also, some aspects of impact of Sirhindi's thought have been dealt in the work. But if the inquiry is pursued further and still more in detail, as to how deeply has the personality of Sirhindi influenced the nerve of Islamic thought, particularly in India, can be of great import.

Appendix: Dr. Iqbal's Tribute to Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

حاضر ہوا میں شیخ مجذوب کی لحد پر
وہ خاک کہ ہے زیرِ فلک مطلعِ انوار
اس خاک کے ذروں سے ہیں شرمندہ ستارے
اس خاک میں پوشیدہ ہے وہ صاحبِ اسرار
گردن نہ جھکی جس کی جہانگیر کے آگے
جس کے نفسِ گرم سے ہے گرمیِ احرار
وہ ہند میں سرمایۂ ملت کا نگہباں
اللہ نے بر وقت کیا جس کو خبردار
(بالجبریل)

"I presented myself at the grave of Sheikh Mujaddid-
The clay which emits light all around under the sky-
The specks of this clay put to shame even the shining stars
As this clay holds in its arms that knower of mysteries,
Who refused to bow his head before emperor Jehangir,
Whose warm breath lends warmth to the lovers of freedom,
Who in India is the guardian of all that the *Millah* stands for,
Who was raised at the right time for the mission by God Himself."

(Bal-i Jibriel)

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